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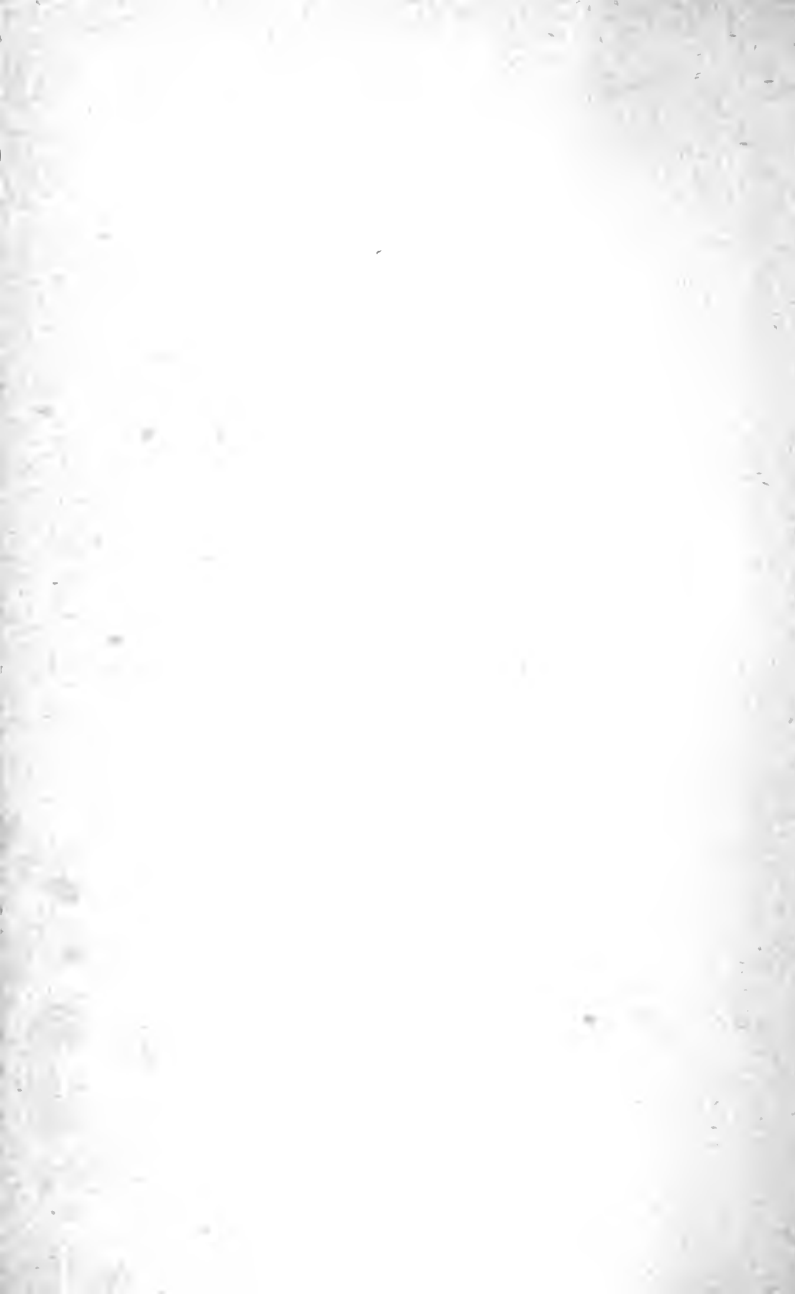
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# The Rewards of Taste

BY THE SAME AUTHOR:

## The Penalties of Taste and Other Essays

12mo, cloth, \$1.50

The essay which gives the title to this exceedingly readable little volume is followed by five others, respectively entitled: "Two Kinds of Conscience," "Bashfulness," "The Nerves of the Modern Child," "Some Lessons of Heredity," and "Our Poorly Educated Educators."

Dr. Bridge is a physician of wide practical observation and experience, and his treatment of these themes is of the most catholic kind. His plan is generous and kind, and his style is simple, direct, agreeable—even chatty. The reader can give a fair guess at the scope and significance of the treatment from the very names of the essays. The two that seem to us to possess especial value are "The Nerves of the Modern Child," and "Some Lessons of Heredity." These are of prime importance and are treated in a rather striking way. A layman might have written the others, but not these. On the whole, it can be truthfully and cheerfully said of this volume that it is thoughtful, full of suggestions, and worthy of a wide reading.

—*Los Angeles Herald.*

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The  
Rewards of Taste

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

NORMAN BRIDGE, M.D.



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MCMII

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## Some Tangents of the Ego





# Some Tangents of the Ego

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## I

The study of the genus homo is a pursuit of endless interest. The anatomy and physiology of man, and the diseases that infest his body, have been investigated with amazing success in recent decades. The moral and emotional—the intellectual side of human nature, has been a subject of wonder and study through all history. Why and how do people think and act so variously as they do? What is the basis of their varying equations in society? Essays and sermons, and stories without number, have been written to answer these questions, yet the subject is not exhausted, and never can be.

The general tendencies of human kind, and much of the philosophy of life, were well told some centuries ago. But new problems arise, and new data are constantly being found. The psychology of to-day is based

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on physiology, and has made the character of mind more plain and rational. Moreover, on every fresh discovery of a cardinal fact in science, there must be more or less of a recasting of the theory of the branch to which it belongs. Then in a measure it becomes a new science.

One of the greatest ambitions of the study of man is to be able to understand and predict his conduct under given circumstances; and it is our confusion in trying to explain it that makes the study interminable. If we were all alike in emotions and motives, or if we were any of us constantly the same in these particulars, the question would be an easier one. But we differ, like the trees, and vary from time to time; we know ourselves too little, and others far less, and forever wonder why others act as they do. In trying to say why, we tell stories and guess mostly—we observe carelessly, and analyze and reason very little. We usually misconstrue in another qualities that we ourselves lack; and often when we try to understand, we attribute acts to some impossible motive that we fancy the other must have.

There are some truths that are known of everybody, and so are common axioms. They are verified by the universal experience

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of the race. Certain necessary things mankind must forever do and think, and for these we calculate. It is the unusual, the erratic, the unsymmetrical, that disturb our reckoning and make confusion.

The struggle for existence among all living things must go on. It has probably always been going on, and we need not look to see it stop. With the human family the struggle is not always for the same thing, but it is always for something; for property, shelter, warmth; for personal likes, and for manifold real and imagined joys; for physical existence against the enemies of the body. Each class and cult has ambitions somewhat different from every other, but they are alike in seeking the things desirable for the exigent needs of self.

Selfishness is necessary for the struggle, and furnishes its motive power. And it makes vulgar cattle of us too often for the comfort of the thoughtful. More or less we prosper by the misfortunes of others, and are glad of the misfortunes; and we try to excuse ourselves for being glad. We push others out of the easy paths if we can, and only once in a while, when the awfulness of the struggle is apparent, feel ashamed of it.

We are separate and different, yet more

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or less connected, units, and we bowl on through the journey of life, struggling to keep up with the great procession, and hold favored places in it. In our evolutions we are bound to make detours and go off at tangents, sometimes great and prolonged ones, and often without knowing that we are out of our usual grooves. We make some of these detours purposely, but most of them are really blunders, which we would avoid if we could. The intention is to keep rather closely to the beaten path. Sometimes we push out to one side a little, and pretend that we are pursuing an independent or experimental course, but the moment we find that we really are, most of us feel timid or shocked about it, begin to make excuses, and rush back near the main road.

We are usually blind to the fact that we are out of the regular course, and this is one of the greatest of our misfortunes. Others, for some reason, perhaps for fear of being misunderstood, hesitate to tell us; if they do tell us, we are in doubt whether they are sincere, or mean to hurt us. So the fates that always ought to help us, seem to prevent us from being helped much. We must seek the road alone, and, if we can, fall into the regular step of the caravan without the

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aid of others. This is the course of real independence that we have to pursue. In the momentous marches of our lives we walk alone; we may take counsel of others, but must follow our own advice.

Our egoistic ideas are necessarily the strongest we have. Altruistic impulses are kept in abeyance. As others cannot, in the long run, think as much of a man as he thinks of himself, he must look to his own needs. This is both laudable and necessary; and if we can see him give a little thought to others, and yield a little that he might possibly, within the law and custom, take for himself, we regard him as normal. We never think of accusing him of selfishness as long as he takes only what we regard as fair to the general lot. And society has very positive notions of the measure of egoism that may fairly be expressed in what we call selfishness. But this is only one of the numerous manifestations of egoism. Multifarious ideas, ways and habits of people who are credited as unselfish, are as truly egoistic, and they persist as tenaciously as, for example, the morbid desire to get money; and they are as significant blemishes of character.

Egoism that is normal needs no restraint;

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it is only when this absorbing motive leads us into excess and erratic conduct that it hampers and harms us; then it becomes a proper subject for the knife.

Everyone would have a symmetrical character if he could, for this means the greatest aggregate of happiness. Egoism, self-thought and self-direction are given us that we may order our lives to the highest purposes. So ordered, we have the most ideal character that is possible to us.

For convenience and power to do things the ego must teach us habits, for these multiply our hands and feet and eyes of service. The purpose is, of course, to create habits that will always help and never hinder. But we sometimes make bad habits—misleading feet and uncunning hands. Yet nobody tries to create such things. Some men have a weak pride in them after they are formed by accident; but perversity is not premeditated. No man would willingly make a race less than his best, and freakish habits do not help to the best race.

When we investigate the bad and queer habits we uncover a chain of curious fatuity. At the core they are found to come almost solely from the various yearnings and antagonisms of our egoistic emotions.

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Some of them we have ourselves created solely; some we have been helped into by our environment; and many of them have come largely by hereditary influences.

While it is true that we rarely succeed in learning our own egoistic fads and angles, and rarely convince any man of his, yet most men would like to know if they have such foibles; and, on learning they have, are eager to mend. There are examples of such mending, even metamorphoses of character as in the so-called "new birth" under the stress of religious feeling. The instant the individual is thoroughly conscious that he is far out of the path he desires to follow, he promptly tries to come back to it, and sometimes succeeds. The realistic novels, and the vast range of caricature, the sermons and essays on the foibles of life, and especially the hard knocks of experience, have doubtless helped some to see a part of their own defects, and to correct a few of them.

## II

The foremost egoistic excess of our time is probably greed. It produces what we call variously avarice, penuriousness and parsimony. It easily forgets the proportions of good taste, and may forget the law, and become criminal. In women of slight self-restraint and poor moral balance it may appear as kleptomania; but the alienists refuse to recognize this as a form of lunacy—to them it is merely a vulgar vice. The same bad balance in men leads to common thieving or more refined rascality. A variation is selfishness for minor things, and disregard of the rights of others. This leads to boorishness, often shown in the merest trifles. It may be more conspicuous because it descends to trifles, as it more shows the lack of proportion begotten by the egoism of selfishness. Some men and women of this general class are physical and moral degenerates, and become habitual criminals, apparently for pleasure.

An opposite tangent is reckless giving and



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spending of money. The victim has no sense of proportion as to values, and no adequate idea of property. He may strive to gain and get ahead, and might by the accidents of life acquire a fortune, but he could not keep it. He would spend and squander in the most erratic manner, and become poor, unless he died speedily. Such people are useful, and often the very best souls, but they are unfit to lead or direct in life. They should always follow, or be directed.

One of the most disagreeable tangents, and very common, is excessive conceit—self-enlargement, egotism in its very purity. This shows us people who are forever the butt of jests, good subjects for the drama and literature, and always amusing to others. The sketches of them are amusing even to the subjects themselves, who are always unconscious of their egotism. Who ever knew a conceited man to be conscious of his conceit! If such a one should suddenly know it, his fault would be gone the next day. Acquaintances may tell him of his weakness, but to him they are usually prejudiced, or they envy or dislike him, or are conceited themselves.

The peacock strut begins very early in life. The most striking form of it is in

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children; it appears numerous and in several orders of society. In no other class of persons is there ever seen a mental bent that is so positive, transparent and easily understood as this. The symptoms may be volubility, romancing, boasting; more likely they are the doing of all sorts of acts for the unconscious purpose of attracting the attention of others, especially strangers, or persons a little strange, like neighbors and friends not of the child's household or set. A child will play for hours with other children or by itself in the presence of only its mother, or some person it does not care to impress, and play in the most natural manner, and for its own wholesome amusement. But let a stranger approach; then watch and you will see the scene change. Suddenly the youngster begins to do a dozen different things that he had not thought of before, and they are all such as would presumably attract the attention of the stranger, or impress him with the superiority of the child. And it can easily be seen by a little study just what form the conceit takes. If the child is vain of his general smartness, the tricks will show it, as in pompous declarations about something—anything that he fancies will make an impression. If he is

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vain of his expert skill, or of his prowess, he is likely to show off in some mimetic performance, or to pick a quarrel with, or domineer over, something, it matters little what; it may be a dog, or another boy. If the stranger ignores the child the latter will become more bold and outlandish, till the limit of parental endurance is reached; and nothing that can be done, short of actual humiliation of the offender, has the smallest effect of repression. On the departure of the stranger the child promptly returns to his normal or more wholesome demeanor, as if nothing had happened. In the half hour he has exhibited two phases of his nature so different and opposite that it might have been two children. The victim of this vice is often so completely absorbed by it, that it practically dominates his life; in the presence of others it rules him completely; and, even when by himself, he contrives schemes for his own glorification, and often displays a high degree of ingenuity, and sometimes the most appalling deception, in this behalf. The two impulses, the conceit and the strut, are substantially alike; they are expressions of the same emotion, and it is all egoistic—wholly selfish. Such a child will not do a disinter-

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ested act of kindness to another when it costs anything in effort or self-denial. He will do kindnesses on compulsion, or when he sees something in glory or attention or privilege likely to come back to himself, but not otherwise. And efforts to keep him to a standard of duty are met by the dogged or surly reluctance of a rebellious prisoner. Duty is a word unknown to him. In these particulars boys are, I think, a little more barbarous than girls, only a little—any way they are more brutal in their barbarism, if not more exasperating.

It is no excess to say that not one in a hundred of the caretakers of these children has any conception of the mental basis of the conduct I have described. To the mass of them it is roguishness, bad behavior, naughtiness and meanly taking advantage of parent or nurse in the presence of strangers—never the legitimate result of one overpowering emotion. They often punish for it, but not correctively, for they never make the child see the mainspring of his actions, which is the only first step toward any real consenting reformation. The child is ashamed of the emotion the moment he perceives it, as the man is; and in his soul

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he afterwards thanks any power that has made him discover it.

The most unfortunate tendency of the ego is shown in the pathologic state of despondency, or melancholia. Egoism moves the world, but the moving force is weak except when we are free from bodily sensations that worry us. We can stand sensations that hurt; not those that worry.

Hunger may gnaw us until we are fed. We eat in pleasure, and have comfort that we have eaten, then we take up our burdens and go on. So of other sensations and wants. But too much introspection, too much thought about self—the physical me—hampers our power of objective action and stops all good creative work.

A normal man goes into battle with courage and forgets himself; or he carries forward large enterprises of peace with no worry and little feeling about his personal self. He is dominated by the one emotion to pursue the objective purposes of his life. But let him have a harmless palpitation of the heart, or instable abdominal nerves, and his mind will wander from his work; he will have all sorts of vagaries of introspection, and believe he has a mortal disease. He may become an incapable baby, or a cring-

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ing coward. He cannot sleep. He may force himself to go on with his work, but it will be a listless performance. He may discover that his memory is poor, and fear insanity, or be afraid for his personal safety; and all this when his sensations are slight and without danger. Why has his backbone disappeared? Not usually owing to any serious sickness, but because the peculiar nature of his disorder has completely changed the relation of his ego to his work and to the world.

This melancholy ego is really the most selfish of them all, only in an unusual direction. Unfettered by such self-scrutiny, we have the normal ambition for the world's rewards. When the gloom or the bodily fear strikes us we are more than ever selfish, but not for fortune or fame—in that direction the emotion may cease, while it is alert to escape from a physical calamity. Nostalgia, or homesickness, is another variation of this type.

Tea, coffee, tobacco and alcohol sometimes help a man for the moment by freeing him from some of these annoying sensations. But it is a question whether these and other stimulants do not, all of them, in the long run, do more harm than good. That men often

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demand them so strenuously is but another evidence of egoistic insistence.

Another form of mental twist is closely related to melancholy, namely, that exhibited by the intense absorption of an invalid in the things that concern himself. His pains, feelings, thoughts and interests are his universe. He is less afraid of dying than he is that others will not regard him as needing attention. The well-meant remark of a visitor that he looks well to-day, throws a shadow over him that lasts for hours. He even becomes cross, and, after his visitor has gone, will remark on how absurd it is to come in and talk to a sick man in that way. He can, in a measure, direct his thoughts to the business of life, and he worries less than some melancholics do about dying. The paramount interest of the world to him is that his needs of the moment shall be conserved. He may come to have pleasure in his invalidism, and be grieved, not merely that people should say he looks well, but that he should recover, and so cease to be an object of interest and solicitude on the part of others. Such people may be said to be sick long after they are well! They are the clay with which miracles are wrought by faith and prayer, by mind cures and mes-

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merizers; by laying on of hands, and by non-science called science. But the miracles consist solely in some mental impression that, for the moment, creates a new hope and removes the egoism, or subordinates the emotional basis on which the invalidism rests and has continued. A fire in the house, an earthquake, or the sudden appearance of a mouse, might accomplish the purpose quite as well.

Over-civilized and over-developed society always contains numerous specimens of this unfortunate class. They need something to break in upon the monotony of their lives; they need to be shocked, hypnotized or angered by something that will change the current of their thoughts, and for the time fill them with some dominating emotions other than those of an exalted egoism concerned with their own sensations. The pity is that now and then we shock the wrong person, and are cruel to the sick who never magnify their ills, and could not be cured by any change of emotions. But such mistakes are no worse than, with the best intentions, we make in other ways in our dealings with people from day to day; for if there is anything we are nearly certain to do, it is to misjudge the motives and emotions



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that govern other people. If our estimate of the motives of others comes to their knowledge, they are usually either outraged or flattered, and generally have a poor opinion of our discernment.

Allied to the peculiarity just described is a feverish yearning for amusement and entertainment—what some have called the “company fever”; company mania would be a better name. It besets some people from infancy to middle life, and after. In childhood, crying and general fuss compel attention and coddling. The more highly wrought the parents, and the more nervous the child, the more he is entertained and kept excited, so that he easily grows to have a constant yearning for this sort of stimulation. If he is sick or weak, the desire is accentuated, and he may become nearly insane on the subject. When he reaches this pass, his emotions easily drift into a mixed desire for entertainment and sympathy.

Such people constitute a distinct class of what might be called emotional freaks. Many of them have the hysterical temperament in a high degree. They have an unwholesome and intense avidity for attention and sympathy. They develop such ardor of desire for these favors that they

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forget the moral law, in their schemes to command them; they deceive in the most extreme and cunning fashion, and literally stop at nothing to attain their ends. As these schemes of deception are often associated with hysteria, the symptoms of this disorder have in many minds come to be regarded as voluntary and wholly controllable. This theory is only partly true, and, as to many hysterical persons, it is false and cruelly unfair.

The "injured air" is one of the variations shown by these people. It may command attention, and so pander to their emotions. When carried to great lengths this feeling impels to extreme self-abnegation and voluntary martyrdom, and occasionally leads intense natures to suicide. Most of the suicides, especially among the young, are due to this debauchery of emotion, and not to fear of disgrace or prison. And we must remember that the young, even small children, may have these uncanny emotional promptings. There are plentiful records of moody school-children committing suicide when smarting under some rebuke or in the frenzy of jealousy. Of such cases the greatest number are probably between fifteen and twenty-five years of age, but middle life is

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by no means exempt from similar weaknesses.

Love is mostly egoistic—that is, selfish. We love too often for the possible rewards; love, hoping for a return in some sort and degree. The ardent love one person has for another is usually beautiful, and *seems* unselfish. But watch and observe, and you may soon see evidence that the moving purpose is less love than the hope of being loved; the hope of some return. How love ministers to the egoism of the individual is shown in the accessory emotion of jealousy. Love that is completely unselfish hardly knows the meaning of jealousy, and is incapable of it. Jealousy is an egoistic fear of being defrauded sentimentally, and is by inversion an attribute of selfish love. Jealousy is often fired by trifles. We are apt to think a man is growing childish when he shows a childish estimate of the acts of others that refer to himself. We forget that his egoism and feelings may be touched, and so throw him off his balance on this point, while he may be correct in every other particular. Woe be to the balance of that man whose sense of what attentions are due him from others, becomes exalted. For he may show the most silly effeminacy

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in certain directions, and do all manner of foolish things, even suicide.

Lovers' quarrels are mostly due to failure of adjustment to each other of the two egoisms—the self-regard of the two. There is no trouble about the love that each has for the other; no quarrel ever comes from that. The quarrels come, rather, from the love each has for self, and the estimate that each has of the duty and love the other *owes*. It is the fear and uncertainty about the love receivable that is the matter; never about the love payable. It is a debtor and credit situation. We always have more trouble about the bills receivable—we are afraid they may not be paid, or not paid promptly or in the exact currency to please us. We do not worry so much about the bills payable, although it is a green spot in the record of human nature that some people have large scruples on that score. That they are thus sensitive gives us a new faith in human kind, and a better hope for the world.

Many of the most fascinating people reveal, sooner or later, that there lurks beneath their gentle demeanor a consuming ambition for personal gratification, regardless of others. It is a sad disillusionment

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to find this out. On first acquaintance we are forcibly and instantly drawn to them; their charm is like a June morning, and they seem faultless. Sometimes their selfish emotion may remain permanently hidden from most of their friends, but the discerning ones make the discovery, and now and then some emotional explosion reveals it to the general gaze. Then we discover just what a human vampire, sucking the blood of personal devotion, really is. That the vampire should generally be ignorant of this ruling purpose of his own life, is the pitiful fact.

While nearly every one likes to be loved, it is the dictum of some writers of both sexes that women most covet being told of it. The testimony is so unanimous that it must be true, and egoism is, of course, at the bottom of it. Kipling has shown vividly how the emotion can, in a woman, run wild. She fishes for praise, and makes talk for love words, and sulks if she fails to get them; yet she picks flaws in the very terms of the homage paid her. If she is told she is beautiful and lovely she remembers, or invents, some prior hint that contradicts it, as though from sheer malice she would see if she can goad her admirer to greater

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extravagance. Uncandid in her angling for flattery, she rebukes the slightest, even venial, insincerity in the terms in which it is uttered, and will repeat the game often—and quite oblivious of the fact that she is playing it.

Every normal nature has an avidity for returned affection. But there are degrees of it; it may be wholesome; it may be overpowering and wanton. It may, when wholesome, be hidden, like commendable conceit, so that when it is discovered it appears to have ingenuously tried to keep hidden. Then it is like a delicate perfume; and it glorifies human life and living.

Bashfulness, which is nearly universal, is sometimes so extreme as to amount to a positive deformity, and it makes people afraid to act; they hesitate, fear consequences, fear further embarrassments to such a degree that they never can take an efficient stand in anything.

This peculiar emotion, when in an extreme degree, makes its victim so fearful of meeting people that he is liable to become a recluse; he shuns not merely society, but his friends—the people with whom he could work. He sees a friend coming down the street, and crosses to the other side to avoid

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him. He cannot be depended upon; he cannot depend upon himself. He knows his weakness, but is powerless to overcome it. This phase constitutes in part the picture of melancholia, but it may occur without that mental defect.

It seems almost wicked to say that too much politeness is a character blemish. Yet it is true, and I do not mean the insincere politeness alleged of many people—even of a whole nation, but the genuine quality of the best of our kind. True and thoughtful politeness always renders social intercourse more comfortable. But when excessive it becomes a burden, an embarrassment that makes you shun your friends. They will hide your hat to make you stay and dine with them, and then embarrass you by refusing to accept the smallest favor; or if they do accept, will cover you with a speech on your virtues and their unworthiness. Fearing they may violate the best amenities, they lose all sense of relation, and by over-doing them waste the energy they need for the business of life, and so make life actually more difficult. Worse, this blemish makes a man disingenuous. In your company he will pretend to like a thing because you like it, or he thinks you do; or forego a

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thing he desires because he thinks you dislike it. Ten chances to one he makes a mistake as to your tastes, and so both are made uncomfortable, and there is no gain anywhere. And if you detect his instinctive tricks of politeness, and try to foil him by a counter-play of the same sort, you will probably increase the confusion.

One of the most insistent tangents of the ego is shown in its irritation by the acts and words of others. The ego in some men is more easily nagged than it is in others—it has its weak side in all of us. It is jarred most by the things that are avoidable; and these are very largely the acts of other people. The unavoidable things, even if they are irritating, do not disturb it half as much. The wind and rain; the noise of trains and mills may be endured. But irritating things done by people are avoidable, and therefore exasperating. If all people affected us alike, or if they all presented the same moral picture to us, we should be equally irritated by the same acts done by any of them. But they do not affect us alike. Comparative strangers, or people unfamiliar to us, have a measure of novelty and uncommonness in behavior and looks. This, in a degree, overcomes the irritation, or has a neutralizing effect



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upon it, and so it annoys us less. Then, with strangers, we have an attitude of reserve that helps us to overcome the sense of annoyance, and we are helped by an intuitive caution to hide disagreeable manners from those who do not know that we can display them. Besides, as to the strangers, it does not always occur to us that they can avoid their disagreeable ways.

It is different with our families. Our own people have no such defense against our criticism. We are so familiar with them, and they with us, that we have less to hide from them, and so there is less impediment to our impulses. We make their lives feel our irritation; we first object to what they do or say that is innately rasping to our nerves; then we become more annoyed at the same things; repetition begets increased irritability. Then the ego is nagged by the things that are not innately irritating, but become so because these familiar persons happen to do them. Finally, nothing they do or can do is satisfactory; their every act is annoying; and even their faces, forms, voices and gait start within us a disagreeable feeling, and create rebellion.

This is not a fancy picture. It is often seen in the modern family of highly culti-

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vated people. A man may be genial and moderate to the outside world, and have a reputation for justice and gentleness, but to those nearest him, the members of his own household, or some of them, he is a cross, sour, snarling, ungenerous animal. He may be aware of his infirmity and try to avoid it, but he frequently breaks away and explodes in anger at some inadequate thing, or expends a vast amount of energy in controlling his temper. In either case he is a pitiable object, for he is bound to end with injured nerves and some degree of moral chaos.

Cases of this kind sometimes become so extreme as to constitute true insanity—a form known as oikomania. The irritability may be toward a particular member of the family, and may be life-long, or it may be directed against all of them. It is more likely to exist between parents and children than between two children, and it is often strong between husbands and wives. It is liable to fluctuate, depending for its variations on the physical condition of the individual, the degree of fatigue, and the amount of work and worry in other directions. It is often marked toward those that are intensely loved. A woman is unhappy

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with her lover out of her sight; yet when he is present she quarrels with him constantly. The history of love is full of examples of this sort. The lovers quarrel as easily as the sparks fly upward; they separate only to be drawn together by an irresistible impulse—to quarrel, to part again and again, or reach a final tragedy.

When these people know their weakness, their efforts to mend are usually an object-lesson of wonder. They go at it with strenuous will and tense muscles, and try to force themselves to ignore the things that irritate. If they succeed, it is always at great loss in nerve force; it is not an economical way. The only profitable course is by the gentle wooing of a sense of tranquillity and relaxation that is proof against annoyance. The mood is everything, and it can be enticed, but not with clenched fists. The great thing is to start right; then the growth is easy. It is like dropping from a rapid gait to a slow one—it helps deliberation in all things. An impetuous man, trying to say a serious thing hurriedly, is embarrassed and worried over the effort. When he can resolve, and stick to it, that he will speak slowly and deliberately, he becomes a changed man. His thoughts come easily, and readily fall into

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words. He cannot be stampeded by disturbing influences. A steady, slow stroke of the pen may annul the muscular confusion of writer's cramp. The writing is smooth and easy, and by some strange influence on the mind the thinking is easier, and the temper smoother also.

When, as usually happens, the remedy suggested is beyond his reach, the best way is to remove the oikiomaniac from his family, keep him among strangers, and if these become too familiar, remove him again. His disturbed ego, freed from its irritations, rests and is restored. Various diversions fill its life, and it forgets its horrors.

An amusing sign of this mental drift is shown in antagonism to any proffered advice or leading. Many a man discovers that he is cross and snappish to his family and friends, and restrains himself from the major offense. But he continues to show the same lamentable trait by resisting every suggestion made to him. His friends understand this, and learn to manage him. If it is vital to have his support of some plan, they will first disfavor it in his presence, or lead him by non-committal allusions to propose the scheme himself. They would not dare to say to him: "We should like to

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have you approve of this measure," etc., unless they wished him to reject it. But they say, rather: "This measure has been proposed, but probably you don't care to consider it," and his impulse is prompt to say that he likes the idea. By a little adroitness these people can be led in this way for years without their suspicion.

The hyperesthesia of the ego is not always so much shown toward one's intimates as toward the general conditions of his environment, both personal and material. Everything annoys him; nothing is just right. He is worried by everything less than perfection, and his standards are captious. The day is too hot or too cold; the soup was poorly seasoned and the steak was tough; his collar did not fit, and his neck-tie was soiled. His servant annoyed him by not knowing the unknowable. There was a draught from the window that distracted him. Yes, the book was a good one, but why would any writer persist in using such vulgarisms?—The concert? It was well enough, except the work of the tenor, who sang flat. And so on interminably; it is the tangent of the blasé man or woman who has seen the world, and is tired of it; of people who have allowed

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their irritability to dominate their lives, and make them, as well as their neighbors, miserable.

This bent usually begins in childhood, in an excessive desire for entertainment, a restless ardor for new things. The desire is a normal one, and all children have it; nor is it necessarily harmful. But indulgent parents and nurses usually help to make it grow—they never moderate or repress it. When excessive it is like a "wild" locomotive, and tends to hysteria and "nervous prostration." It grows by what it feeds upon; helps to make the old-young people, with little of the ideal simplicity of youth; people whose nerves are rasped, and teeth set on edge by life's atoms. From such material emerge the grown-up irritables for whom this world is, apparently, unfit.

There are people of passive natures whose lives are, unknown to them, one long continuity of protest. They never compliment or express active satisfaction in anything; it never occurs to them to do it. They mention the adverse and disagreeable things. Nothing is quite right. Yet they rarely scold and are not rampant fault-finders; and they are not bad people. They have no ardor of delights to mention; nor enthu-

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siasms to voice. Ask them how the journey was, and they reply that it was or was not unpleasant. The lecture was bad or it was not; the weather was or was not disagreeable. The language is always along the highway of protest, never in terms of approval or pleasure. They are not merely wanting in enthusiasm; they kill it by a withering blight. In giving vent to your enthusiasm in their presence you feel yourself sinning against good form. They are wet blankets to enthusiasm of any sort; it withers in their presence like a flame under a fire-extinguisher.

We see every day an egoistic tangent that is the product of a mixture of bashfulness and conceit, and it is both curious and interesting. One man is very polite with strangers and, in public, deferential to everybody, even over-polite. With his own people, and hidden from the public gaze, he behaves like the average man or even less politely. He probably reasons automatically that politeness is right and desirable, and the due of certain others; but the important fact is that it soothes his own feelings and gives him a sense of comfort to observe it toward outsiders. And this is an analysis that he would be the last man in the world

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to make to himself; to him this sort of conduct is normal and requires no more explanation than the shape of his face, or the color of his hair—nor half so much, for he sees in his physical body evidence of his heredity, and that is capable of analysis.

Another man is gruff and severe to the public. With his intimates and in his private confidential life he is gentle and natural; says what he means and always means what he says. But project him into the public, let him feel that he is under observation, and his demeanor changes in an instant. Now he is grandiose and austere, wrinkles his brow, talks and acts on the plane of defiance and buncomb. He quotes, probably uses slang, and acts perhaps as if he were a great personage or were conscious that he is making history. He has personal dignity to conserve, and it would not be in keeping with this to ask favors or put himself under obligation. His conduct and speech reveal all this to others, but he is as unconscious of it as he is of the function of his spleen. He needs or wants a service of another person, and it would favor his getting it if he should ask in a candid and simple manner. But he could not goad himself to do such a



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thing, and he so frames his petition that if the favor is granted it shall seem to have been proffered by the other person. He avoids the possibility of a rebuke or a refusal. He wishes to borrow some utensil of a neighbor and it would seem a natural thing to go and ask the loan of it. But that is not his way. He goes to the neighbor and, after making some conversation about commonplaces, he says, as if by pure accident or as an after-thought, "I suppose you wouldn't like to loan me your plow for a day;" or, "How would you like to let me have your plow to-morrow?" When such a man proposes marriage he is liable to do it in a way to entrap the woman into answering a question he has not asked. If her answer is negative his conceit is spared, for he did not really ask her; he only gave her a chance to express her sentiments if she would.

Once a New England Yankee came to me for an official favor that he regarded as very important. He believed that my consent was necessary. It meant a great deal to him. It should have been easy to state his case, and ask for the thing desired; but that was not the way he did. He merely said, "Don't you think you had better" do

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so and so? To have asked the favor in terms would have made him blush to his ears, and have been a distinct shock to his unconscious conceit.

The peculiar egoism of these persons entails as much pain when they have to confess an error as when they petition for a favor. And they pick their words and plan their actions so as to avoid it if possible. Their opinions are put in a tentative or an interrogative way, so that they cannot be driven into a corner and forced to confess themselves wrong. If you ask one of them a question that can be directly answered only by a number, he does not answer it directly. Suppose he thinks the number is 67—he does not say that. He says, "Perhaps it is 67," or, "Don't you think it is 67?"—thus escaping conviction if the figure is wrong. It is a cowardly sort of conceit, but it is a common one.

Talk furnishes only one of a thousand ways of working off a certain kind of energy, and ministering to egoistic needs that one feels without knowing it. Loquacity is one of man's numerous unconscious excesses; loquacity, I mean, in the interest of the ego. He does not know (but his neighbors do) that he is forever talking for his own

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pleasure; and he is surprised if such a thought is suggested to him. Observe a loquacious woman visit with a silent one who listens well; after an hour she will come away with delight at the charming visit she has had, and full of praise for the other woman. But the latter has not spoken a dozen words, and the few she has uttered were tentative hints. The visitor has talked incessantly—and thinks her hostess a superb conversationalist.

Probably few of the very talkative people can ever lessen their habit; it would profit some of them greatly if they could.

But the habit is not always nor wholly unfortunate. It furnishes a vent for nervous energy that otherwise might explode in a worse way. Moreover, it helps bashful people over their difficulties. Frequently a rapid monologue will spare one from the abhorrent sense of blushing. It is like twirling one's watch chain, or like the little laughter with which embarrassed people speak. It has another useful ministry, namely, to furnish a refuge for some silent people. A loquacious man needs a silent one to listen to him—a garrulous one is a bore. Note his chafing at a talkative person who gets in the first word. But a silent

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one, who will listen attentively, look intelligent, reply in hints and monosyllables that will rather help his utterances to seem acceptable, is the delight of his life. The proper niche for the silent man is to get into relations with a talkative one. He acts as a sort of buffer—something at which sentences may be fired, and that will not stop the flow of them nor interject embarrassing talk, but listen and look appreciative. And the comfort is mutual—the adjustment is perfect—the quiet man is happy also. He has found his complement, and is glad.

Two sharply contrasted phases of the talkative impulse stand out in the observation of us all. One is shown by the man who ripples on like a singing bird. It is simply his own sweet chatter on anything in the universe, merely for the joy of saying it—and as guileless as the air. He is amusing. But the contrast is in the man who has his say (and it is an interminable one) in antagonisms and personal insistence. He has fixed views on some things, and adverse views on everything that another may propose. You cannot possibly make an initial statement that he will completely agree with; and he will fly off into a long argument on every trifling point he can antagonize. In

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his conversation there is no such thing as give and take. He only does the one and does it with such effect of omniscience as to either make you feel that you are in the presence of a superior being, or that a fiendish animal has fastened its claws into your back, and will not let go.

Undue egoism is shown in the tenacity with which people cling to their beliefs, religious, political and ethical, as well as in their intolerance of opposite beliefs. Once committed to a particular idea, such a man sticks to it. He grows to believe it more and more, and that contrary views portend ruin. He is impatient and testy with those who have different ideas. A moderate man expresses himself in moderate terms on a public question, but somebody resists him; numerous people controvert him; perhaps some accuse him of insincerity or dogmatism. His conceit is nettled and he becomes, not the moderate man, but an intense one, and expresses views and arguments that, in the beginning, he could not have uttered. Lawyers and bishops may undergo this mental change. There is a common belief abroad that, once committed on a subject, a man cannot change; and when we see one candid enough to sink his foolish

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personal feelings and adopt new views that are more rational to him, we are surprised. I once heard a brilliant woman express intense disgust for a relative of hers who had changed his politics. She declared that his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all belonged to the same party; and that now the foolish man had gone and changed his politics! As if his views on the subject matter could possibly have more influence upon him than his pride of family!

### III

The tangents of the ego that are faults are many and varied. The great practical question is how they can be corrected. Most of them are simply unfortunate habits. A few stamp their possessors with a questionable quality of genius that is mostly useless. In the main they are misfortunes that anybody would be glad to be rid of; as every one would like to resemble the average man or woman—wholesome, consistent, balanced and stable.

The remedy is mostly with the individual himself; others may help him to know, but not to apply it. He must change himself, if changed he becomes. The mechanism, as already hinted, is the acquisition of a new mental mood, a new emotion, that becomes the ruling power in the life. And a new emotion does rule, provided it is a strong one, and the delight of its rule endures. But to make it endure, the new way must be practiced incessantly, till it has become a fixed habit, and the old one is

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abandoned; so that finally the new way is automatic and the old automatism is indistinct or lost. To accomplish this means usually a long period of watchfulness and struggle, although the metamorphosis may be rather sudden.

There are many examples of egoism thus changed. The whole course of a man's life is often altered quickly and radically by religious feeling. The process starts the moment he feels that he is a sinner. He excises the sin he knows of, whatever he does with the others, and a revolution occurs in his soul; he is a changed man, and may so continue for life. A new human love, an infatuation with a new doctrine, even a fad founded on next to nothing or nothing, may start as radical a change that shall grow to be an automatism. Often the personality of another is a potent force. We need to have human examples to copy, for we are born to be imitators and emulators. A man learns he has a tangent that is unlikable, and soon finds himself admiring some personality that is free from this defect, and has qualities that stand in sharp contrast to it. This personality may become his model and a mark for his emulation. There was once a public speaker who spoke



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always in haste, and was embarrassed, forgetful and easily perturbed; always fearing before he spoke that he would not do well, and afterward that he had done poorly. He was transformed on listening to one lecture by Wendell Phillips, with its deliberate method, its superb self-poise and air of repose. He became deliberate, methodical and imperturbable. Then he could think logically, and even on his feet, and all his methods both in public and private, were more or less colored by this acquisition. The house might have fallen about his ears and he would not have quivered. He had adopted a new guide, was under the spell of a new mood, and it had become the governing impulse of his life.

The sequence in the stages of the amelioration is uniform and interesting. The first step is the discovery of the fault; next comes the knowledge that it is harmful and hateful; and next the resolve that it shall stop. To carry out this resolution it is a great help to admire a superior man or woman who is free from the fault. The history of General Grant has helped countless men to habits of quiet persistency, deliberation and silence. The final step of all is the patient, persistent watchfulness

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and work to create the new habit. It is usually a long task, with a great reward.

It is idle to say that conversion on the religious side can remove all the correctable defects and tangents that belong to us. It often does abolish some that we have or think we have. One may genuinely desire to reform; have a spirit of true humility, and try to see what his offenses are, and succeed to some degree. But his judgment is liable to be warped by his conceits and self-depreciation. And, after his conversion, he may still have a dozen egoistic blemishes that hamper his career, and may develop others through the sanctification he thinks he has acquired.

Moreover a liberal minority of such people accuse themselves of faults they never had, and believe they are going straight to perdition unless they are somehow cleansed from these imaginary spots. A part of the sins they are guilty of are morbid introspection, exaggeration of their own defects, and the conceit of humility. Some of them suffer for years from the pangs of conscience, and practice self-castigation heroically, and a few become actually insane. Such are some of the casualties that come in the great strug-

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gle of life to attain the right standard in thought and conduct.

The one aberrant trait that is helpful in correcting others, and rarely harmful, is extreme unselfishness. Providence seems to have designed this as an antidote to things that are worse. Its possessors, some of them, have enough worldly wisdom to keep themselves in bread; some, however, give away all they have, and are left with nothing but their unselfishness. They do good, and help the rest of us to put away some of our vanity and greed; they sometimes make us ashamed of our littleness, and reveal to us how trifling some of our glittering possessions really are. Most valuable of all, their very gentleness and fealty to ideals may help us to see that a new mood and a new ideal are possible even for us.

Is it true, then, that a man may change his mood and cease from being troubled by the things that have nagged him for years? May a woman stop hating people whose faces, voices and ways have been a nightmare to her since she can remember? And can a man stop short in his lifelong habit of living on the sweet comfort of his own self-measured superiority? A woman has, for a quarter of a century, been persistent

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and automatic in her efforts to conserve her beauty, and has lived on the joy and fear of it. Can she change now, and cease to care for it, or care little?

All these things are possible, and may become easy. The instant a man sees that the things that have ruffled him are among the inevitable attributes that have come to certain people through the centuries, half the obstacles are gone. If then he can learn how foolish it is to bump his head against a rock, and to consume energy over irritations that are avoidable, he will find the rest of the task easy. He will learn not to be nettled by the jokes that are planned to test him—he will stop hating the jests, and enjoy them with the jesters. Above all other things, this kind of experience, like the fraternity initiations and life at school, will take the conceit out of a fellow, if anything on earth can.

It is not a harder lesson for a man to learn, that the noise of the children in the back yard is music, instead of a thing made to plague him. He would not growl at the sighing of the wind through the trees, nor the fitful swish of the rain against the window. He will be happy, and feel rested, when he can be as calm at the dash of the

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water if it comes from somebody's garden hose.

When a woman learns that the people who have crazed her grew as they are and are as fixed in their ways as she is; that they are a part of the inevitable variety of folk that make a world; when she sees that the one avoidable thing that has hastened her age is her own carking; and that her jealous enemy, if she has one, hopes her worry may go on and deepen her wrinkles—then she has found the power to spare herself, and heap triumphant coals on the heads of the spiteful. And the task is not hard when undertaken with this insight.

A man in the night throes of insomnia, chagrined at being awake, and fretting at his annoyance, drives away sleep by his very perturbation. Let him sincerely resolve that he does not care to sleep, but enjoys being awake, determine that he *will* stay awake all night and think pleasant thoughts or read a lazy book, and in ten minutes he is fast asleep! He has made himself proof against annoyance, and has demolished the scarecrow of his slumber.

But these changes rarely or never come by mental tension or by hammer-strokes. They come, rather, by the gentle force of the

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relaxation and tranquillity of a new philosophy, and a new and enticing motive. The instant the emotions change, and we bring ourselves to enjoy the new ones truly, the restfulness of the mood steals over us, and we wonder that the old habits ever held us so firmly.

The rule to cultivate tranquillity and encourage new emotions, and be proof against irritations, works well as to the ordinary habits of life—the usual tangents of the ego. But as to the melancholic tangent it refuses to work, or works haltingly and never well. The courage-maker is sick, perhaps because the digestion is poor; and sermons and good resolutions may do something, but cannot do much. It avails little to say to a despondent man, or for him to say to himself: "Brace up and have courage!" You might, in most cases, as well talk to the sea. The mill that makes the cheerfulness is clogged, and refuses to work. Some other help must be discovered; some other way must be found.

Under the deepest despondency the human mind has one power that may be taken advantage of for this very state, namely, its power to think for and advise others. A man feels a deep sense of gloom that, to his

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automatic thinking, is sure to be ended only with death, and he is tempted to take his life. Let him even try to do this, and be interrupted in the act by another man, who comes to ask advice for his melancholy, and he will promptly give the second man the good counsel he was himself about to violate, namely, that the world only seems dark, and that if he will wait patiently a little while the clouds will pass away; that they cannot be long-lived; and that it is the worst recklessness to give way to a temporary feeling of gloom.

One step toward the salvation of the man with the blues is to stop and think what advice he would give another who should come to him with the same complaint; then, having got the advice clear in his mind, to try to follow it himself. The effort in behalf of the other will help him to save himself. "What would I advise a despairing soul?" is the interrogative formula that every victim must learn by heart; must say over a thousand times, and until, like the jingle of a seductive rhyme, he cannot drive it out of his head. It must come back to him again and again, and come unbidden. And its coming will not be a cause of grief and deeper despondency, but will lighten

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the load as it will offer the promise of relief. For every time the man takes this rule home to himself, and truly considers what his advice would be, he then and there begins to follow it, and lifts his head, if only a little, to a new light.

And this rule is not hard, it does not belie any of the facts of human nature, and it is wholesome for everyday life in a thousand ways. After all, it is nothing but a method—an attempt to make people forget their egoism and look at their own troubles impersonally, a profitable thing for any one to do, and most helpful to one in despair. For if such an one looks at his prospects through the spectacles of his sombre emotions, he is lost; he is in a very dungeon of gloom, without a ray of light. His only safety is to take himself and his feelings for the moment out of the problem; or, rather, to lift himself up and away from his own personality and emotions, and look down at his interests in a speculative manner. And if the gloom is great, almost the only way for him to do this is, in complete sincerity, to create the conditions in the interest of another person, and to regard himself as directing another and a hopeless soul. This vicarious method makes the struggle of the



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ascent easier. It introduces a vantage ground, a resting place, like an intermediate note, to enable one to step up with ease to a tone that is higher and more certain.

Beyond this there is always left to us another resource of some consequence, namely, to look and act cheerful, and thereby help to create an actual feeling of cheerfulness. Acts do in a measure evoke the feelings that normally accompany them. To act calmly helps to a mood of calmness; so of courage and cheerfulness.

If one has the strength and self-control to do this, he is sure to gain at least a little in spirit, and begin to move out of his despondency. It takes a superior sort of stoicism to hold a man up to a rule of this kind, but men have it and can cultivate it, and they ought to cultivate it. For, as a force in life and conduct, it is a saving quality of grace.



## The Mind for a Remedy



## The Mind for a Remedy

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Man's mental state is responsible for many of his sensations. An emotion can make him happy or unhappy; it may cause him to blush or blanch, to break out into perspiration and to shake with fear; it may fill his mouth with saliva or dry it in an instant and it may suddenly stop his digestion. It is said that intense emotion can turn the hair gray in a few hours. It may cause a sudden intense pain in the head or elsewhere; may make the pulse irregular, and the heart to beat with such violence as to rupture a cerebral vessel; and it may cause death by the sudden giving out of the few remaining muscular fibres of a degenerate heart.

On the other hand, an emotion may drive away pain and discomfort, indigestion and sleeplessness, and turn grief into joy, and make a change in the governing impulse to action that may continue through life.

Dislike or irritability may cause one to be annoyed by trifles, and life to be nagged into

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a continuous torture. A contrary emotion may beget good temper in the midst of all the cumulative annoyances of life. Emotion with an idiosyncrasy or a weakness makes many of the forms of hysteria, as cultivation of the right emotions may prevent these symptoms.

Right emotions are sought always, and probably by everybody. Everybody would be happy if he could. If an emotion can drive away pain and increase tranquillity, every one who knew about it would naturally cultivate it. Nobody would willingly seek mental states that give him pain and indigestion, unhappiness and insomnia.

A thousand guide posts have directed men to the emotions that promise peace and freedom from suffering and discontent. Many of these are religious; hundreds of different shades of faith, and with all sorts of inspiration and philosophy. The range is wide, and all kinds of spirits and gods, and one God and Jesus Christ, are invoked in manifold variations; and people are told that by embracing this or that particular form they shall have some physical or spiritual advantage not given to the rest of the world. Some religions are urged upon unbelievers for the purpose of spiritual

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safety after death, with incidental advantages in this life; others, like one of the latest, are advocated because they promise to rid the body of disease and bring happiness and harmony here—with certainty of happiness in the hereafter; and all because God is good and God is everything. One teaches that disease may be cured by prayer; another, that disease is an imaginary thing and that if you only understand it does not exist, it does not; still another, that the laying-on of hands or some weird motions made over the patient will cure. One cult says that the human mind has a chemical quality and must learn to attract the desirable thoughts and emotions, and to repel those of an opposite sort, as chemical elements do. One writes of the "majesty of calmness," another, of the wonders and the power of relaxing to give joy and strength; and another has convinced a considerable company that the great enemies of the race and the potent makers of grief and sickness are the emotions of anger and worry.

There can be no doubt of the value of these influences for relief to many people in various states of physical and mental trouble. They have by their own testimony

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received help and strength from them. There can be no doubt of this fact. If the help has come through the imagination, that is an explanation of the method and does not impeach the claim. So the treatment of the sick is not confined to medicines alone; other influences are quite as valuable, even indispensable. People often do get well of painful disorders, if not dangerous ones, by the influence of helpful emotions.

Probably all of these influences have some power, and for different classes of people different values. Some of the measures are applicable to one person, some to another, depending on their respective idiosyncrasies. That the measures apply at all, and do good in some cases, is a lesson that scientific medicine ought not to lose. It must be confessed that in the main physicians have almost wholly failed to use for any good purpose these surprising influences.

The catalogue is a long one of the conditions of body and mind in which these influences work. It includes a large series of aches and pains, and of odd sensations like numbness and tingling, sometimes called paresthesia. It includes some faults of the functions of the body that are usually sup-



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posed to be wholly uninfluenced by mental states as, for example, many forms of bad digestion, and irregular action of stomach and intestines. It includes a wide range of mental perturbations, as insomnia, worry, anger, brain and nerve fatigue, disturbed emotions, hysteria in numerous forms, and all that combination of symptoms known as neurasthenia. This word always means a worn-out or run-down condition of the mechanism of the brain surface (the gray matter) that is engaged in mental attention, in care taking, and in liking or disliking people and things. Doubtless the brain and spinal cord are always involved together in these cases, but the brain most. The disorders are true psycho-neuroses, a term that covers most forms of so-called hysteria and neurasthenia.

The influences that I have named work for benefit in various ways, first by arousing expectation of relief; then by reducing such emotions as wear upon the nervous susceptibility, as, for example, worry, anger, suspiciousness, fear, jealousy, pride in danger, anxiety and sense of care and duty, and the emotional states of diffidence, mental tension, and nervous touchiness. These bad emotions are often overcome and displaced

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by new and better ones, such as hope, faith, love, aspiration, serenity, relaxation and imperturbability. These help one to endure without friction a flood of trouble and care that otherwise would be unbearable.

How these measures may be practically applied and the old emotions displaced by the new; and whether to any degree mystery or deception are justifiable in general, and to be fostered for either party (the one who needs the relief or the one who tries to give it) are serious questions that deserve the best study.

In some cases, and for some people it is not a question of the need of mystery to accomplish the required purpose, for that is a fore-known certainty. Many people never can be appealed to on a wholly rational basis for any emotional effect; they cannot use their own unmysterious powers for their own relief. The only question is how far scientific caretakers of the sick, who themselves are not deluded or wool-blind, shall foster the idea of mystery and perhaps supernatural power in dealing with invalids, and just what their procedure and sequence of action ought to be.

Our ambition always must be for an unworn-out thinking machine that is not too

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emotional; this is the goal, and that gained, all else is easy. How to reach it is a problem. In all cases of so called nervous prostration the chief desideratum must be (after or with restoration of bodily functions) to rest the brain machinery that is tired; i. e., change the trend of thought; give new scenes and occupations and stop the regular work. But this is not enough; we must change the current emotions and induce new thoughts not connected with the vocation or the things that have worried and worn out the endurance. This last measure is the most potent of all influences, and is usually possible of realization. Hope and faith *can* take the place of despair and doubt, suspicion and melancholy. Tranquillity and relaxation *can* come instead of incessant tension, apprehension and exalted alertness. Imperturbability *may* stand instead of fret, irritability, diffidence and fear; and benevolence and unselfishness, instead of hate, envy and jealousy. The difficulty is to know how to bring these changes to people of all sorts of mental peculiarities and crotchets, as well as, perhaps, of moral perversity. When the transformation begins we discover a new being. A new birth in thought and freedom has

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occurred. The change manifestly cannot come to all people, only to most of them for whom the best efforts are made by themselves or others. There are at least three cardinal forces that start the process. They are:

1. The power of the victim himself. This is in the few instances where he knows his failings and changes intelligently. He knows he has overworked and resolves to rest; he has fretted too much and has been governed by ignoble purposes, and resolves to change, and does it. Such people are the greatest and grandest in all the world.

2. The help of others who know better than the patient what his failings are and who point the way in a rational manner. These others are the friend, the doctor and the priest, who can persuade and convince without arousing that most irresistible of obstacles—the notion that unpleasant advice is unfriendly.

3. Some new influence brought into the mind that can change the bad emotional bent, as some mystery or mysticism, some novelty or humbug, or a belief in the power of something beyond himself on which the patient leans or believes he leans.

These last, except when believers in a

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wholesome religion urge a reliance on divine power to help one to lift himself, are usually brought to the patient by the psychic, the quack, the believer in strange things, the mesmerizer, the intentional fakir, and the religious doctrinaire who is himself deluded. And the doctrines strike people in a thousand different ways, and find as many shades of criticism, doubt, credulity and blindness.

Probably the mystery cannot be dispensed with for all people at all times. Some must have it in one form or another, and it is not true that any of them wish to be humbugged; but they are susceptible to influences that come in the guise of mystery and they cannot help it, nor learn to help it much. And the mystery is sure to come in one shape or another to susceptible natures, for all time. It has been so through the history of the race and there is no ground to expect that it will change greatly. Wonderful effects from mysterious things, like secret nostrums and occult influences, will continue to be recorded hereafter as they have been heretofore.

The fact that the disorders and patients described have been the objects of charlatanism so long, is no reason why we should not,

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in their behalf, resort to mental effects that are possible for good, and that are founded in the physiology of the brain and nervous system. Indeed, the scandals of the past are a sufficient reason, if there were no other, for considering this subject in a dispassionate and scientific manner. But the pathetic condition of a large class of nervous patients is another reason, and they deserve the best thought and talent of students in these very directions.

As to the cases and influences I have referred to; and to all cases of sickness that are at all chronic, whatever may be their degree of severity or their peculiarity, it is clear that the doctor has certain very positive duties. As I conceive them, they are:

1. To see what brain and nerve powers and functions have gone wrong or are out of order, as shown by the mental and nervous symptoms.

2. To discover what functions of the body are wrong, that have been made so by mental influences.

3. To study the personal qualities of individual patients and see how each can be affected in the best way by psychopathic influences.

4. To apply, with care and discretion,

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such measures as are found necessary for each case.

The first of these duties it would seem possible to do easily; yet it is not. Doctors are much more inclined to prescribe drugs or physical means for the supposed disease that they guess to be the cause of the symptoms, than to even seek for some causation in mental or emotional conditions. Indeed, as we study the sick, we too often forget all about the physiology of the nervous system, and especially the relation of the more voluntary to the more involuntary portions of it. If we would only try to know what powers and functions of the brain are going wrong, we could, I believe, often prevent insanity from occurring. And it is not difficult when we study a patient carefully, and have his confidence, to know whether his emotional and mental life are right or wrong, and if wrong what they need for correction. His insomnia is produced often by some annoying emotions; his loss of memory by introspection and worry, perhaps over imaginary bodily ills; his lightning nervous response by overwork and wrong emotional attitude toward his environment. So of many other mental and bodily symptoms. The greatest art of the doctor is to

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gain the confidence of the patient so that he will reveal that part of his inner life which he usually hides completely.

As to the second duty, to see if physical functions are disturbed by mental forces, we almost never think of it. It does not occur to us that a pain could be so produced, or indigestion or a coated tongue. And the suggestion that one could have a hemorrhage from the lungs or throat from the effect of emotion seems preposterous. Yet I have known beyond a peradventure of two or three such cases. Many cases of indigestion are made worse, if not produced, by eating in a state of mental tension, or under depressing emotions of the class that are removable by other emotions invoked to displace them. Dyspeptics are accused of malingering because sometimes they can eat with impunity articles and quantities of food that usually cause them acute suffering. The fact is that with the right emotions digestion is better; with the usual ones it is worse. A dinner with friends and good feeling, and without cares or sense of haste, is a very different thing from bolting a little of even the best food under the pressure of business worry.

That, with many persons, a pain is made



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worse to their consciousness by their thinking and talking about it, and by their friends magnifying it, is as notorious as it is that the pain is often gone the moment they can ignore it. Yet we rarely make the smallest suggestion of mental influences in this class of cases. We seldom ask ourselves whether a pain is made worse by thinking on it, and if we do, and find such is the case, we usually scold the patient or lose interest in him for this reason, when we ought to have the more interest, and might convince him of the mental element and correct it. We could also enlist his friends to help him forget the pain, which is usually the reverse of what they do. Instead he usually gets a round of anodynes which are never completely effective, while his mind grows more and more alive to its sufferings, until its emotional condition becomes ripe for it to be carried away into forgetfulness of the pain by any faith remedy or mental legerdemain that may be offered. The feeling of desperation has been reached where the victim will grasp at any straw of hope. A promise of positive relief is the greatest boon of all, and that is the offer of the new remedy.

That the cure is complete in so many

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cases is proof that there are a great many imaginary and functional sufferers. It is proof also of what the doctor could do if he would try. Serious organic diseases do not get well by such influences, but they are a minority of all the cases of sickness. That as a rule there must be some lessening in the intellectual grasp of the normal relation of things, the usual sense of proportion, when a person can give himself over to such faith in mystery, does not help the matter nor excuse us. Moreover there are exceptions to this rule in the few strong minds to whom some supposed novel phenomena seem inexplicable save on the theory of supernatural power; and they ignore their logic as a thing that has played them false. The claim made by some writers that these people are verging toward true insanity is not correct, but is, I presume, suggested by some of their own fixed theories about mental action. Fixed theories more than our logic are prone to play us false.

The third consideration is the most important of all for any practical application of psychopathic measures. People differ so widely that the same course cannot be pursued with all. It is true that most of the patients who come to us in need of these

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remedies ought to have the same, or nearly the same, management. They have nearly all had too many cares or concerns that have worried them in one way or another. These need to be cut down. They have exhausted the power of mental attention with likes and dislikes. Their irritability has become phenomenal, and their nervous equilibrium has reached the last limit of instability, and so the explosions of hysteria and neurasthenia come easily. This function of the brain requires rest, and the emotions need especially the antidote of wholesome indifference long applied, and removed as far as possible from the causes that usually set them in motion. This means that neurasthenic men should get away from their business cares that nag, and that women should drop every social obligation and the demands of dress, and even the care of their own children for long periods, and get out to nature and a little way back toward barbarism.

Many of them have worn down their cerebral strength by anger and envy and jealousy, and need a new pasture of good fellowship and peace with the world. To this end their own families may need to be made over, or be born again; for they have often

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helped to accentuate every fault. Those that have suffered long have suffered more as the days have passed. Too much attention to the nerves that suffer has exalted their capacity to cry out. All such ought to be taken away from their sensations by some powerful influence that can completely engage the mind in hope and attention, and give them rest.

Some there are whose power of objective attention is always reduced save when in absolute health. When sick, even trivially, the subjective me is so exalted that they magnify their symptoms incessantly, and fence themselves off as by a wall from the objective world. As long as they are a particle sick nothing will help them but some power that can arouse their faith and interest to rise above their subjective trifles. They can never be depended on very far, even when well and able to forget their sensations and live an objective life of usefulness; for any trifling disorder, fatigue or accident unsettles them. They are unsafe to send on long campaigns; some trifling sensation will make them retreat in a hurry. They need to be dealt with carefully, for they are always lame on the slightest occasion. And the word stoicism is not in their vocabulary.

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Then those with an abnormal tendency to psycho-neuroses (the hysterical constitution) are always troublesome, for their emotional natures are powder magazines ready to explode if they are only jostled. They need the same dose of rest from their usual emotions, and to have new and more wholesome ones introduced into their lives. They are constantly in the condition of a normal person who has been nervously overworked; their usual state is one of neurasthenia and they should be so managed, and large nervous tasks should never be expected of them. They require more nerve rest, and more protection by good emotions from bad ones than their fellows, and they ought to be spared the severer tests of common life. They need to travel in protected paths all their days. Moreover, many such need a service that is rarely done for them, namely, to be shown how they are constantly living with emotions that, being of the wholesome kind, are excessive in degree, or with those that are altogether wrong. Standing in the way of this service is a peculiar secretiveness as to their emotional lives, which usually prevents their nearest friends from ever sounding their depths. They themselves, least of all, know and can study

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dispassionately their emotional lives, and their own families and fellows, instead of helping, usually aggravate their mental warping.

To apply the right remedy in each case successfully is impossible. The most we should expect is partial success, for the mental twists of the patients are so varied, as well as the degrees of tact we can use, that numerous misfits must occur. Moreover, it will be said that the prescriptions are impossible; that cares and worries cannot be laid aside; that one cannot forget his personal griefs and mortifications or change the emotional current of his life. But there are thousands of people who have done this very thing when absorbed with some new thought or fad or faith; and some have been able to do it by the power of their own common sense applied to themselves. They do not put aside their cares and griefs so much as they see the adjustment of them to the rest of the universe, and discover what an amount of needless worry is given to the things of a day, and see how their journeys are made easier by repressing certain emotions and encouraging others.

Lack of wisdom on the part of the doctor causes many failures. Tell a man that he

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imagines half his ills, and he may refuse to speak to you again. But tell him first that the mind of everyone affects the body always; then that he must be like other people; then ask him seriously to think if it is not possible for him to be dwelling too much on his ailment—and you have perhaps started him amicably in the right direction. To a few it is safe to be blunt and severe, and to tell them of the mental element in their sickness, but it is rather a dangerous experiment, so fixed are sufferers in the reality of their woes. Any hint of auto-exaltation of woe or pain is generally taken as proof of unfriendliness and lack of sympathy. When such hints are taken agreeably the benefit is prompt.

Tell a man that his fret at being awake keeps him from sleeping, and you have hardly helped him at all. But show him how an honest desire to keep awake all night will put the mind into a mood of such tranquillity that the spirit of sleep will come without obstacle, and you have destroyed his insomnia and transfigured his soul. Tell a woman not to fret at the ways of others, and you are talking to the sea, but show her how these annoying ways are inevitably born to some people, and that they are

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ethnic curiosities to be amused at, and you have done her a service.

It is easy to deal with the patient who is so sensible that he can change his mental tendencies. You have only to show him that his emotional strain and his nervous agitation are too great, and he becomes tranquil and imperturbable. But such people are the rarest exceptions to the rule. More there are who are so constituted that they must have some mystery or quality of the unknowable to fix their faith on, in order to have any mental benefit. It is difficult to deal with these on the basis of perfect candor. To be frank and unmysterious is to fail to do them good. Your advice is too common and simple.

Is deception justifiable in such cases? The answer must be yes and no. The minds of the sick are many times distinctly abnormal, we cannot theoretically regard them as ever quite normal; and they are not capable of reasoning about their interests exactly like themselves in health. But many are at times more capable than the average of well people, and it is a great problem to deal with each of them. It is never right to be unfair to the best interests of the sick. But it is not unfair to leave



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them in the dark as to the abstruse things of cerebral physiology that no man understands completely. The plan of trying to explain everything to the patient has its drawbacks. It is never done anyway, for half the things the doctor tries to explain he only partly understands himself, and it is better for the patient's mind in most cases to be either dealt with dogmatically (usually involving a degree of laudable deception, because the doctor pretends to know something he does not), or be left in some admitted doubt and uncertainty. This latter gives room for faith, which is wholesome.

Where the psychological element is strong I think we do wrong not to try to create faith and hope that may help. Whether this is done by the positiveness of the doctor or by something else matters little, as long as it is done. If religion can make one happy and hopeful, it is one of the natural rights of the sick man to have it; and if something that stands for it can in any way relieve cares and give rest of soul (which means emotional rest), it must not be withheld. No physician can justify his neglect of psychologic influences that give hope, on the ground of his efforts to be

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scientific, when he considers his own shortcomings in every sort of knowledge.

A patient who has perhaps suffered long or who is impatient, asks for his doctor's views about some one of the insubstantial cults, and the doctor is troubled to know what he shall reply that will comport with his duty to be helpful to the sick, and not strain his common sense or self-respect. His temptation is to say that it is all nonsense; that only weak-minded people take it up; that any good effects from it are imaginary; and that it tends toward mental unbalancing. Each of these declarations expresses a partial truth, yet they should not be said to the patient. To say them might constructively discredit a number of other religious beliefs, some of which the doctor himself may have great respect for. Besides, they do not express the exact truth.

The time comes in the mental experience of some people when they are tired of thinking (if they do think) and depending upon the science of things that is the common knowledge of the world. They seem to need something novel that does not require thinking, only believing. And oftentimes the most unreasonable thing takes best; the greater the jump from a basis of reason into

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chaos, the easier it is for some people to make it. Ought physicians wholly to discourage such things because the concepts believed are unscientific and absurd? This seems natural, but we must remember that the parts of all religions which people take on faith are inexplicable by any of our scientific formulas. Moreover nearly all scientific men have had some religious beliefs no more justified on logical grounds than the non-existence of matter, or some of the equally absurd theories of our friends whose sanity we are tempted to impeach. And it is a psychologic fact that somehow such unreasoning faith helps to tranquillity of soul, and tends rather to good conduct among men, and this is one of the several compensations.

Why not be entirely truthful as well as candid with such inquiring people? We might then say this, and say it kindly: If you have reached a point where you must have something more than you now possess to pin your faith to, this new doctrine may serve. If you are so constituted that you cannot make a haven of mental rest along the well-known laws of brain action but must have something occult or mysterious to lean upon, this new belief may help. If

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you are ready to deny the laws of nature as to your own body, while you rely on them in your business and money-making, this new thing is probably what you are looking for. If you can put aside your scruples about the common knowledge of all time, and cease to stickle for it, and give yourself unreasoningly to this new doctrine, it will probably give you mental comfort. Then the ridicule of the world of science that insists on the existence of matter, as well as that of the believers in the older religions will, by its very boon of martyrdom, make it easier for you to believe and bear it all with sweet temper.

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The cerebral wear and tear of our extreme civilization leads to many cases of neurasthenia and general uselessness, and to many sorts of hysteria and insanity. The medical profession and all thoughtful people alike ought to do something to lessen this for the hampered people who go about their business from day to day, and try to keep well, or pretend they are well. This service may, I believe, be done if we will study the subject with something of the enthusiasm with which we have pursued the microbes, and

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not ignore the influences that are wholly mental.

It is evident that the remedy lies either in the direction of lessening the load or increasing the cerebral capacity to bear it. There is small chance of increasing the power; a thousand years hence this may come to be done, perhaps by the process of development and the survival of the fittest through the centuries. At present the power of mental endurance, other things being equal, is substantially fixed for every person. It may be increased by various aids for brief periods only. As other things are usually unequal it can generally be more economically used than it is, and this, for the better business of life, is tantamount to increasing it somewhat. To lighten the load should be our aim, for the load is too heavy now, especially in the refined and forceful society of America.

How to do this is the enigma. It is easy to say we will begin by cultivating the better emotions and reducing the wearing ones, and by cutting down the needless burdens. But we have religions and ethics and philosophy, and through the centuries have been taught to keep the good emotions and discard the bad ones, and to put away

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foolishness. And, notwithstanding all our good precepts and some good examples, we have got into the bad ways of the present time. We must, evidently, be more specific as well as more radical in our measures. If any great good is done the remedies must be fundamental, and far-reaching in their effects; not a few must be influenced, but many, or no improvement will come to the community as a whole. But we ought to help the few, if we cannot reach the multitude.

A certain few cardinal things are apparently necessary to be done in the care and culture of the people, and they are mental and moral mostly.

1. We must lessen the emotional attentions to infants. These wear out the brain energy and produce erethism that may last through life. Almost any infant can, in three months, be developed into an autocrat, attempting to rule his world; and many of them have, before the end of their first year, true neurasthenia resulting from these influences.

2. As far as possible we ought to let the children alone, and stop the common incessant effort to entertain them. This effort continues the harmful effects of too much

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emotional attention in infancy. Let them entertain themselves; this will develop their minds and rest their emotions. We ought to observe them, with their knowledge, and talk about them in their presence less. We do this now so much as to provoke a series of most vicious emotions that grow into bad life habits. Fairy tales and fairy talk are unwholesome to most of them. The average child already has too much imagination; it is a beautiful thing but it is not necessary to increase it.

Such rules for infants and children encounter many difficulties. Two motives actuate parents and children alike. The first is to see that the children are happy and pleasing here and now. The reflex effect on their elders is pleasant; we like a happy child, and like to make a child happy. Thus we and the child conspire to the same end. The second motive is to make sure that, if possible, the career of the child shall be long and successful. Both emotions are for the good of the rising life as we understand it, the one for the now, and the other for the future. Is it any wonder that we should generally sacrifice the future for the present? The child is incapable of foregoing a present pleasure for a future good,

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- and the parents are too ready to agree not to count this day's indulgence, even when they know its ulterior effect is bad. A mother carries her baby in her arms a long time to get it to sleep because it likes to be carried and refuses to go to sleep in its bed. She says the child will not go to sleep otherwise, but if she reflects she knows this to be a tender-hearted fiction. Her fault is lack of courage to break the habit. As the child grows older and begins to acquire ways that she fears may make him inelegant or impolite she has no hesitation in working for his future, and she will drill him by the hour and worry by the day about his manners (that at fifteen he would spontaneously correct), and let him go on with nervous injuries that will last him through life. Parents are shocked if their boys smoke cigarettes, but they have allowed habits of the nervous system from babyhood up that are even worse for the future of a boy than smoking cigarettes in his teens. Parents who have perpetually entertained, coddled, and diverted their children, who have jumped to their call as to the command of a superior being, are by logic and nature estopped from objecting to cigarettes, coffee, wine or late hours, when



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the children pass into youth, and would still gratify their desires for all sorts of stimulating amusements. None of these sins against nature is so great as those that have been earlier fostered and encouraged. Indeed, had the earlier ones never been committed, many of these later indulgences would not be sought. The exaltation of nerve centers, born of vicious excitement in childhood and continued in years of habits, cannot be ignored in later life.

Parents plead that their children ought to be obedient and self-denying as to indulgences that harm, because they, the parents, have been good to them in their infancy and childhood, have made pleasures for them, and denied them little or nothing of joy. This is the very gist of the error. If the emotional propensities of the children had received as much tranquil rest as their muscles, their brains would have grown up with more normal demands and with better resisting power.

3. We ought to stop making young ladies and gentlemen out of children. To push them into responsible social life, as early as is the rule in the best social stratum, is to develop emotions and cares, and subject them to tests and temptations that ought to

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be postponed for years. And the only justification we have for it is our and their unwholesome pleasure in it all, and their hoped-for escape from diffidence later. The truth is that for many of them the diffidence is an advantage, and ought to be encouraged rather than otherwise.

4. We ought to minify the emotional struggles at school as far as possible. The strife for supremacy, the fear of failure, the envy and jealousy of others, constitute one of the most wearing influences on the brains of the young. Not all, by any means, but many of the school children suffer in this way. It is a duty to find out the ones being most harmed, and protect their nervous lives if possible.

5. An increase of the outdoor, athletic life of the people as a whole would be one of the greatest gains of all. Indoor life keeps us below the par physiologic, and to raise the standard of the system as a whole of course helps the brain.

6. To reduce and repress the unhappy emotions that are engendered by the struggle to shine in society and in business, is one of the most urgent needs, and hardest services to render. These emotions are envy, jealousy, fear of failure, and sense of

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danger to our pride, all of which are wearing and depressing. This is the school experience carried into adult life; and with all its ramifications it does incalculable harm to the cerebral resisting power. To reduce the struggle itself as well as its bad emotions is quite as important. This ardor to do the duties that society and business seem to impose on us (and beyond the getting of bread) is a large part of the cause of the nervous overwork among men and women. When a woman has neurasthenia from so-called nervous overdoing, the chances are six in ten that the excess of work was done in response to a demand of some sort of social tyranny, and was thus by the highest ethics unnecessary. The same truth obtains with men only to a slightly less degree.

7. Less dress-parade in our lives is necessary. Reduce the everlasting dressing of our bodies, houses, tables and equipages! It all becomes a bug-bear to the tired-out brain, and it tires the brain. It is what makes women feel like going crazy when they think of packing their trunks for a trip to a fashionable resort, and it makes some of them really crazy. Such parade is a silly demand that our conceit and envy make upon us, to the worry of the tired brains,

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and with the paltriest return in life's recompense.

8. It is merely a truism to say that people who are carrying mind and body loads that are too heavy should have them lightened. If the load is apparently necessary and free from the vice of bad emotions, the rest is as truly necessary. Rest and change are demanded. These influences shift the bearings; take off the pressure from parts and powers that are tired, and put into exercise faculties that have been dormant, so that the man as a whole is brought up, his brain and body are refreshed, and mental wreck is fought off.

The influences that I have condemned are what in large measure make the apparently inevitable revolutions of the wheel of American society. It is a spectacle that the old world has furnished, only in a different degree, again and again. Many eminent and resourceful families eventually fall behind in the greater world influences, while their places are taken by people who have come up from humbler beginnings. The rise to power of these is due to the fact that they have suffered less injury from the emotions that grind and wear out the nerve force. They have lived simpler lives nearer to

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nature, and have been moved by ambitions that are less carking and unwholesome.

This continual revolution of the wheel is self-acting and wholly conservative for mankind. The race and company fit to command usually, in the long run, come up to power. The lessening of grasp due to the dissipations incident to the use of power—the miscalled rewards of power—causes its victims to drop behind in the struggle and give place to those not handicapped by such influences. And the wheel promises to go on revolving as, and wherever, this debauchery of resources occurs, and nobody can deny that the struggle is fair, and the verdict world-wise.



# The Etiology of Lying





## The Etiology of Lying

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We all live to some degree in an atmosphere of the unreal. Some of us live most of the time in such a realm. We love fiction, tell stories, and build air castles with something of the facility with which we breathe and walk and eat. Children begin to show this tendency just beyond babyhood, and their elders accentuate it by inventing fictions for them that develop as they are told. The tendency, in some measure, creeps into all the affairs of our daily lives. In mental equation and view-point each man differs a little from every other, and so they see and tell things differently. Rarely do two seem able to tell a thing in one and the same way. Note the differing court testimony of a dozen witnesses about an occurrence which they have observed together. If they are prevented from hearing each others' evidence, probably no two will tell exactly the same story. Inharmony, inaccuracy and untruth are about us always. If the untruths happen to be specially offensive to

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us, and if we use the Saxon speech, we are apt to call some of them lies.

The propensity to get things wrong is so common that we are forced to admit it as a natural bent of human kind. It would be harsh to say that all people have a propensity for lying; inaccuracy, prevarication and exaggeration are gentler terms and quite as true. Yet it cannot be that most of us prefer to be inaccurate or untruthful. The conclusion is irresistible that, millions of times, men lie without being able to help it, even if they know it. And it is probably true that as to most of our errors we never even discover them.

The varying statements of a given fact by different people may often be set down to dissimilar estimates of the same data. But we cannot always justify this charitableness, for some of the variations are nothing but plain lying. Not even the mental warping due to innate human selfishness will explain some of the falsehoods about all sorts of things. Many of them seem calculated to help the one who tells them, but many appear to be wholly undesigned and erratic. These are the lies said to be made out of whole cloth, and for which the truth would any time do better.

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Just a plain propensity for lying, prompted or not by the emotions of hate, envy and jealousy—all differing attributes of egoism—may explain some of these instances. But to charge them all to such mental or moral qualities would be to condemn the race to a deeper degradation than it ought to deserve, and, I believe, deeper than it does deserve.

If we are normally prone to prevarication and inaccuracy there must be some logical explanation of it, or a part of it, in the constitution of the human mind or in man's environing influences or both together. And that explanation we ought to find, if we can.

If it shall be found that many of our offences are unavoidable, then, as to these at least, the most opprobrious epithet flies wide of us. They are foibles rather than sins, and the word lying will have to be curtailed in meaning. But it ought never to cease to be applied to those cases of wilful mis-statement begotten of selfishness or jealousy or hate. Nor, as applied to these acts, ought it ever to be mollified in its severity. They are so awful in their effects, so wicked in their aims, and so inexcusable, that they will continue lies in the most offensive sense. But if some of our falsehoods are found on trial to be unwitting, and hardly

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preventable, their veniality is proven; and they assume at once a new moral aspect, and appeal to our sympathy. For then, since we have been accused of the worst offense unfairly, our good name may be the more easily retrieved. The sympathy of the world is always ardent for the culprit who has been unjustly accused, and if he has actually been convicted, the rush to the rescue is impetuous. Sometimes it seems to be a short cut to the heart of emotional society for one to get himself unjustly incarcerated. Innocence behind bars or under a cruel sentence is one of the most pathetic objects in the universe.

If we shall find that many of the inaccuracies ought either to be known by gentler names than lying, or perhaps that there are extenuating facts, the gain to the accused will be immense. Vindication of the condemned is always a gracious act and a happy one, unless it leads to worse offenses. But if the condemnation has been unjust, the gain for the accusers is also great; for it prevents their errors from doing further harm. The voluntary accusers of a crime that has never been committed are worse off morally than the actual culprits, and more to be pitied.

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Any fair study of the uttered falsehoods of men must show that a large proportion of them are unconscious. Unaware as we are of the way they appear to others, most of them are told in the belief that they are true. The offenders are either unconscious of what they say, or mean to say something entirely different, in its application to life.

When we begin to analyze, and look for the causes of falsehoods we find them largely to consist of influences and conditions that are very rarely thought of. One of the commonest causes is the half-impressions or the false impressions we get from the words, looks and acts of others. Back of this mental effect are several conditions that are as plain as day. One of them is fright. This often produces such agitation of the mind as to make it unable to remember or re-state with any degree of accuracy the simple things that have been seen and heard. Hence all sorts of fictions are told; and many of them are catalogued as lies by the uncharitable. Usually, in the fright, two emotions are uppermost, the sense of danger and the desire to escape; and the memory of events and details is always more or less clouded by these emotions. Under the circum-

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stances it is impossible for the mind to have thoughts apart from feelings, hence the thoughts are all emotions, otherwise thoughts with likes or dislikes; and this mental state is inimical to accuracy. Truth, exact statement, accurate memory, come with mental calmness and self-containment. These give an ability to take in impressions, record them in the memory exactly, and tell them with utter truthfulness. There is no other way besides this whereby we can receive mental impressions and preserve them accurately.

Another fruitful source of half-impressions is mental embarrassment, diffidence and self-consciousness. This state differs very little in its effect from that of fright. The thing that most impresses the mind is one's own feelings, and what he sees or hears is altogether secondary. One's sense of embarrassment amounts to a fear. The other sensation that is uppermost is one of anxiety to escape from the embarrassment.

You see a boy playing with other children and hear him talk and shout like the rest. You call him to you and ask him what his name is, how old he is and where he lives. He looks at you with a blank and embarrassed gaze, colors a little, and is

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dumb. He will not utter a word by any amount of coaxing. If you scold him for impoliteness and stupidity he may look a trifle less at ease but he will not speak. If you pinch him he will cry, perhaps, but not answer your questions. If you keep him with you for an hour and deal gently with him he may find his tongue, and talk and answer questions, but not otherwise. Now, if you are thoughtless, or jump to a conclusion, you may say that the boy is dull, stupid, or wilful; but he is none of these. And he is a fair type of many adult people who are subjects of much wonder and comment.

A man who had once helped articulate a human skeleton, described one day to a simple-minded servant girl the grim details of the process. He told how the flesh had been scraped from the bones, how these had been soaked for days in a vat, and then been bleached in the sun before being wired; and all about the mechanism of the wiring. The girl looked at him with a blank sort of countenance as he talked, and, when he had finished, she said, "Did the man live?" Those who heard it thought her unspeakably stupid, for she was incapable of asking the question humorously. There seemed no

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other possible explanation of her remark, after she had listened to all the minutiae of flesh and vat and bleaching and wires. The verdict was a case of idiotic dulness. But that was not the true explanation; the bystanders failed to take into account the complete absorption of the girl's attention in the fact that she was being addressed by a person of superior importance; and that she was under a heavy burden of embarrassment in consequence. She heard the words spoken to her; yet not one in twenty remained in her mind when he had finished, and none of them gave her any distinct, rational idea further than that a man had had something done to his bones. She could not possibly have told whether he was dead or alive. While the man was talking the embarrassment at the presence before her was decreasing a little, and if he had talked for an hour the discomfort would probably have sufficiently passed off to enable her to take in and reason about what he was saying. But long before this second phase of her mental movement had been reached, she was startled by the fact that he had finished his narrative, and that she was expected to make some response. This exigency drove out of her mind any



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conception she might have had, even in a hazy way, of the story she had listened to. The only ideas then left her from which to frame a remark were: man, flesh and bones. It is no wonder she asked a question that implied the greatest stupidity; and one that might have implied the greatest sense of humor. Let any one who doubts that an emotion can drive a thought or mood out of mind, please to recall the last time he forgot the familiar name of some friend on attempting to introduce him to another. Few adult people have escaped this experience.

These two examples illustrate how diffidence may prevent the plainest words from being heard and understood, and from producing any mental response whatever, or any that is accurate or adequate. But there are many other circumstances that do the same sort of mischief for mental impressions, and to people of every age and of all shades of mental capacity. The wise and learned alike have experiences not psychologically different from those of the boy and the servant girl.

A young man came into the office of a middle-aged lawyer and introduced himself by a name that called up to the other a flood

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of youthful memories. The young man resembled his mother. He had her hair and eyes; and his voice was gentle, as hers had been in her youth. How strange and yet how interesting, he thought, that her son whom he had never seen before, should be here asking for his professional advice! How the looks and voice and ways of the mother came back to him, and what he had thought of her and said to her, and perhaps what she had said to him! As these ideas rushed through his mind he perceived suddenly, with a little mental shock, that the young man had already told him several details of the business that had brought him there for advice. And he could only vaguely remember the details. Then he felt embarrassed lest he should appear to the youth to be dull and inattentive. So he gathered his wits, and paid strict attention to the rest of the account; then adroitly asked to have his mind refreshed about the first statements; and by a series of questions and hints covered up his bungling at the beginning. If he had been as unsophisticated and frank as the simple girl, he might have made remarks that would have seemed as stupid as hers did.

Every person of imagination has had ex-

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periences of this kind. There is nothing phenomenal about them. The mind cannot take in and hold equally well all the impressions that come to it; and it often happens that the thing or thought most vividly perceived by a person is not the one that others expect him to grasp first and best. So all shades of misunderstanding arise, all kinds of misfits, warped accounts, and misstatements about things. People are accused of lying wittingly, when they have simply misunderstood, or half understood words. They are thought obstinate and stupid, or impolite and rude, when they are simply bashful, preoccupied or dreaming, or misunderstand others as truly as they themselves are misunderstood.

Another cause of wrong notions acquired from the words of others is a common mental habit of what may be called impetuous impressionableness. When a statement is begun we fly to a conclusion of what its end is to be, before we hear a quarter of it. We divine, or think we divine, and guess ahead of the words as they are uttered; we usually guess wrong, and remember our impressions of what the statement was to be, rather than what it was; then like simpletons go off and tell our impressions for the

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truth. The result of this is too often a complete subversion of the meaning of the statement.

The condition of mind that leads to this species of blunder is one of great mobility and intense avidity of impression, but it requires for its perfection also a peculiar quality of egoism that gives one an exalted sense of his own ability to divine and grasp the meaning of the words of others before they are half spoken. It requires a sense of modesty to wait until the final word before judging the trend of the story; and modesty is so ungilded a virtue, and so quiet, that we often lose sight of it, or keep it hidden. To be able to get the drift of the story just as it is begun, compliments our conceit and magnifies our powers. And it is not true that people with the habit of jumping to conclusions generally know they are conceited. They are like the old bishop who is said to have replied to a cautious criticism: "I am not conceited, sir; I am simply conscious of my superiority." But the fruit of the habit persists always, and it is a tangle of misconceptions, mis-statements and errors, into which its victims are forever falling and dragging numerous their friends and neighbors.

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One of the most remarkable mental side-tracks is that which results from previously acquired notions of what we are to meet in word or incident. If we have a positive and fixed idea of the thing we are to see or hear, we are liable to find ourselves imagining afterward that we have actually seen or heard that thing, whether we have or not. So strong is this tendency that it often robs one of the power to gather knowledge from sight and hearing with any degree of accuracy. Some men are so impressed with this danger that they study to avoid it. Many a time a consulting physician asks not to be told the diagnosis already made of the case he is to examine, lest it should disturb the accuracy of his observation, or the independence of his thought.

Once an intelligent layman was invited to see an operation for the correction of strabismus. He went believing that the operation would consist in taking the eye out of the patient's head, straightening it and putting it back again, and he told me months afterward his thought of what he had observed. He said that the surgeon took the eye out of the patient's head, straightened it and put it back into its socket, and that thereafter the patient could see straight.

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In response to my categoric questions he assured me that he stood within three feet of the patient's head during the operation; that there was a good light; that he saw all and that he had good eyes; that nothing intervened between himself and the patient, and that the surgeon took the eye out of the head, brought it far enough away for a sheet of paper to have been passed between it and the head, before it was returned to its socket. He told me too that he was sober at the time, and, he believed, perfectly sane.

Of course he saw nothing of the ridiculous thing he described. He did observe this: the surgeon with a forceps grasped the thin white conjunctival membrane at the inner side of the eye, pulled it forward, made a slit in it with scissors, then passed through the slit a minute blunt hook, with which he caught up a tenuous muscle which he pulled out as a loop over the hook. With scissors he cut this half across to weaken it, then returned it to its place, and the operation was over. But the man's fixed idea of what he was to see was too much for him. Probably the next day after the operation he would have told a more truthful story. But, little by little, the memory of what he

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observed grew dim, and his preconceptions grew stronger, till, months afterward, they came to take the place in his mind of what he had seen, and so he was ready to swear, in all sincerity, to the fable that he told me.

We guess what may be meant by a word or look, a sign or motion, and build up a whole fabric of wrong meaning out of it. We pick a word out of a sentence, and surmise for it a meaning wholly unintended; and we make or let it suggest an erroneous ulterior intent. Go into the wards of any hospital and of a hundred patients lying in bed observe a surgeon ask each one in succession to turn over on his back, and you will see ninety-nine of them turn on their faces, or commence to turn before they discover their error. It is invariable, and after a patient is laughed at for it he will sometimes forget and do it again in response to the same question. Why is it? How does it happen? I know of no sufficient explanation but this: that the patient has a flash impression that the doctor wishes to examine his back. "Back" is the only word that remains in his mind as a moving force for his action. He divines—the doctor has not told him—that it is desired to examine his back and

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he immediately, out of politeness, turns his back uppermost.

You may make another request of a hundred patients and not more than one will appreciate it correctly, and be able to do, on the first attempt, the simple maneuver you ask for. The request is, "Please open your mouth wide, and breathe through it naturally." Three quarters of them will open the mouth, take a deep breath and hold it. If you tell them to let the breath out they will do this, but close the mouth. It seems to be impossible for even an intelligent person to get the several ideas expressed by this simple request, and act upon them accurately. Is it any wonder, then, that in a multitude of other ways we jump to conclusions from words and hints half understood, and then state the conclusions as if they were accurate? Is it any wonder that many of these should be called fabrications, or even lies?

In telling a thing, or giving an opinion on any subject that your listener is interested in, the chances are ten to one he will fail to quote or understand you correctly, however sincere he may be in trying. If he is worried about the matter, or has fears, he will surely misunderstand what you say in spite



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of your care in the selection of words. If you say: "I suspect that the boiler you are worried about has a broken flue," he will, in two minutes, quote you back to yourself with the words, "So you think a flue is broken?" You may correct him and say you *suspect* it is broken, and in one minute more he will declare that you believe it is broken. Say to a sick man that you do not know what ails him, but suspect cancer, and you are quoted at once as saying that he has that disease.

Words misunderstood or half heard or heard wrong, are a source of the saddest of errors, and of some of the most lamentable embarrassments of life. A lady went to see her banker, who was also her friend, on a matter of great moment. He found her waiting in his outer office as he passed hurriedly through, and said a few words to her. He spoke them in a slurring, mumbling manner; the lady listened in a surprised, ungrasping way. What he said to her was: "I have an urgent letter to dictate, and shall be glad to see you in a minute." What she heard him say, or thought she did, was: "I've enough bother to placate and don't care to see you a minute"; and she walked out of the bank in tears, and reported

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abroad that he had both rebuffed and insulted her. And all manner of severe things were said of him by his neighbors and enemies. It was so unlike him that some went so far as to say that he must have been intoxicated, even if it was before banking hours in the morning.

Then the meanings of common words, as used by different people, vary so much that to the speaker and the listener they often stand for variant if not divergent things and ideas, and so make confusion common. The accurate transmission from mouth to mouth depends on hearing distinctly, remembering precisely, and holding the same meanings of the words used. And no two people hold identical meanings for all the words common to their vocabularies. They do not usually vary much, but enough sometimes to make men reach opposite notions on many subjects. Many a quarrel leading to an accusation of lying has had no better or other basis than this; and good intentions seem to be little protection against the misfortune. Carefulness is some safeguard, and it is encouraging to notice that there are some people who measure their words when telling of any vital matter, and take pains to *know* that they are accurately understood.

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In giving an account of what has happened or been said, we often bungle, and betray a poor memory. We retain a few words and ideas and the rest fade away into hazy uncertainty. When we repeat, we use the few facts and words we remember and fill in the rest of the picture out of our imagination, or our guesses as to how the complete story must be. It is this filling in that makes the commonest type of canards, the awful whoppers of stories that grow as they pass from mouth to mouth. Once it had been announced that some gentlemen had determined to build a hotel on a mountain. It was thought to be a remarkable undertaking, but the account was clear and distinct, the names of the men well known, and it seemed to be understood by the community. A few days afterward another company of gentlemen announced that they would build a hotel at the foot of the mountain. In a few days more the report was current on the street that the mountain enterprise had been abandoned—that it was because it would be too expensive to build two hotels, and it would be more economical to use the lower site. No man of either company had given the slightest warrant for this conclusion. It grew up in the popular

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mind, not out of whole cloth, but out of the guesses of well-intentioned people from the little they knew of the two schemes. Some of them guessed that it must be too expensive to build two hotels, and that the second scheme may have resulted from the abandonment of the first. The guess had not reached the third noddle in its flight before it had developed into a positive declaration, on the best authority, that the mountain scheme had been abandoned.

A gentleman in Chicago was asked by a friend what would be done if his wife's mother, two thousand miles away, should fall sick. He replied that his wife would go to her by the first train. Two days afterward he was startled by another friend who told of having heard that the mother was very sick, and that the daughter had actually started to go to her. He took pains to find out how the story had grown, and learned that his original statement had (between the two friends referred to) passed through the lips of just three people, two women and one man, to come back to him in this distorted shape. And each one of the three was a person who had a conscientious regard for the truth.

Things said in jest, with irony and hyper-

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bole, and understood literally, furnish a never ending supply of errors of all sorts. A mistake of any kind can grow out of an ungrasped jest, and blunders swarm in this manner. Once a woman held in her arms her baby of a week, and discussed its prospects with the family doctor. It was her first baby, and while she was fond of it, she was also fond of society and amusements. She complained that she could not go to any concerts or parties during the season, for she could not afford a nurse for the baby and would have to stay at home and tend it herself. She looked sorrowful and disconsolate and asked the doctor if he could suggest any way out of the difficulty. The doctor drew his face down and replied in a discouraged tone that there was one way of escape if she cared to take it. She brightened and asked what it was, and he replied: "You might kill the baby." Just then another woman entered the room and the invalid (too shallow to see the irony of the suggestion) said to her, "What do you suppose the doctor wants me to do with my baby? He has advised me to kill it."

The first fictions of child life are a fruitful source of error, and even falsehood. The child is full of fancies and has a varied

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imagination, especially about the things of adult life, and soon learns to invent stories. These are air castles that all bright children indulge in, usually with the assistance of their parents. There is a large literature of fairy tales, and children are told made-up stories to amuse them. The result is to increase their fancies and imagination. At about ten to twelve years of age some children, especially girls, are found telling many of their fancies as if they were true. Every observing person has known cases of this kind. A little girl goes out on an errand, or to visit, and presently comes back to her mother with the most astounding account of what she has seen, and what she has said and done, and the things said to her. And the experience she tells of always ministers in some way to her own egoism and conceit. But the accounts are almost pure fabrications. These cases are a great grief to their friends who cannot understand that the habit is not likely to continue through life. As a matter of fact, a year or two of this experience usually ends by a swing of the pendulum in the opposite direction, and the child becomes a most insistent truth-teller.

This vice is no evidence of total depravity.

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It is simply proof that an imaginative child at a certain time of its life, when its fancies are most active, is unable to draw a sharp line between its fictions and the reality. It was the misfortune of the child that it had too much imagination; that it yielded to the promptings of this too much, and that it had not learned the lessons of accuracy. But it comes to its senses later, discovers how wrong it is to tell a fancy for the truth, and, in many instances, becomes more reliable in its after years because it has had this experience, and been shocked by it.

There is another emotional impulse that leads many adults and more children into manifold prevarications. It causes one to vary his stories and accounts of things to suit what seems to him, perhaps for the moment, the best to please his hearers. In telling a story, or giving an account of some event, it is important to impress the listeners both with the event and with the descriptive powers of the person who tells it. Therefore the account is embellished, enlarged, colored in the most inviting manner, to suit what, perhaps wrongly, is supposed to be the desire or taste of those who listen.

We covet the pleasure that comes from the compliments of others. If we tell a

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good story we are more certain of the compliments. To tell it truthfully might lessen them. Then sometimes we vary the truth to avoid censure. This is a most natural impulse—yet the impulse of cowardice—the desire to avoid a scene. Husbands are said to resort to this finesse to placate their wives; possibly wives have done it to placate their husbands. And children do it in the most natural manner; with many of them it seems to come with the quality of an instinct.

One of the most prolific sources of inaccuracy is our weakness for the superlative degree. Our imagination and our love of the startling lead us to minify the minute things, and magnify the large ones, so that we reach a point where it is next to impossible to give the measure of anything out of the average, or an average thing, exactly as it is. And even our own repetitions of the same thing often grow successively. We find that the ciphers are added little by little to the figures of our descriptions. We start at tens. Before we know it we are telling it for hundreds.

Of all the foibles that beset us, no one is more constant or irresistible than this. It becomes a matter of intemperance like the



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child's ardor for amusements; and it shows that adult people are only children of a larger size. A child is first satisfied with a simple and temperate amusement; then tires of it—ceases to be amused, and requires one more exciting. That wears itself out and a still more exciting one must be found, till finally a condition of absolute frenzy may be reached, where nothing satisfies. This is the daily observation of childhood, not of all children but of many of them. Psychologically, we have the same experience in our telling of things. To represent them exactly as they are, small or large, becomes tame and we tire of tame things. We seek for new and more intense descriptions, and so pass into fiction, and when our fictions run against the nerves or the interests of other people, they are liable to brand them with terms that are also superlative.

Bearing upon this general question, there is another large influence that is usually left wholly out of our reckoning, and yet it is one that is ever present, and controls more or less the life of every normal person. This influence consists of the numerous phases of life and character that people unavoidably have to lead. I say unavoidably, because both the proprieties of

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life and the wholesome influences of the normal mind compel this multiplied existence. In order to keep their places in society to their own satisfaction, all people must hide some part of their lives from most of the world. They reveal different phases to different companies. The companies may be large or small, and they are in the main segregated from each other by sharp lines. The public in general, one's personal intimates, the different elements of one's family, his friend or father confessor, his doctor, and even some casual friend, are so many distinct entities that see the man differently. To each he reveals something of himself that is different from what others see; some perceive qualities the others never dream of, and the picture of the man as seen by each is different from that seen by the others. Nor does the man reveal the whole of himself to even all these companies combined; some part of his life he keeps to himself absolutely. No human life is ever fully known or completely written down. No man would be able to tell the whole story of himself, even if he tried to.

Instinct and custom make it easy, when not disturbed by unusual emotions, to keep these different phases of life apart, and hold

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them strictly for the respective audiences that they are intended for. Some men swear and use vile language with men, but are always polite and clean spoken in the presence of women; especially if these are not their wives or sisters. And the discrimination seems to be so effortless that it must work with the ease of an automaton.

A cultivated and wealthy woman was for many years a leader in society. Other women imitated her and tried to get into her set; yet an unexpected call on her one day caught her swearing at one of her maids. She did not swear in the presence of men, not even of her coachman.

People of all qualities of intelligence and character discriminate as to what they tell people and what withhold. We agree that the truth should not be spoken at all times and to all people. Is it a constructive lie to withhold a part of the truth? You are not under oath to tell the truth at all times, and you would not tell it if you were, and the world does not accuse you if you refrain. Even the loquacious, the excessively talkative, find it easy to keep certain things to themselves.

Your friend has always seemed wholly frank with you about himself. You believe

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you are his confidante in everything; but you are mistaken. There are things in his mind, emotions and life that you could not get out of him with moral dynamite. Some of them he will tell to another whom you may regard as merely his chance friend, and tell easily.

These ways are so deeply rooted in habit, even instinct, that they are a part of the mental life. They are undirected and inevitable. Anyone who succeeds in wholly preventing these habits, in smothering his native secretiveness and discrimination as to what shall be told and what withheld, is called eccentric, instable or daft. He is singled out from the mass of normal people as a curiosity, and one to whom it is unsafe to reveal your soul or even your daily affairs. If you reveal them to him it will be tantamount to immediate publication to the world.

In view of these facts and circumstances, is it any wonder that we sometimes find difficulty in drawing sharp distinctions and in keeping to the line of the terms of our ethics? Our ethics are based on our understanding of right and wrong. Our definitions of lying and truth telling are to some degree natural and inevitable, but they are

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largely man-made, and made because of the requirements of social life. They are certainly good. Society could not exist without them, and the attempt to find out the basis of our falsehoods and to learn how we step over the line, sometimes unavoidably, sometimes avoidably, cannot be taken as an effort to justify wrong.

In our conduct, as well as in our words, we prevaricate and deceive from hour to hour. We put the best we have forward as a hint that we have nothing worse. Our guests are taken into the parlor, and if it is dusty we apologize as if this condition were exceptional. We hide the kitchen from them unless we are sure it is polished. We imply that we are always polished and spruce, when we know better. We hide our tempers as much as we can, and try, before the public, to act better than we really are, —always better than our average.

This deception is laudable if it teaches us to be better and cleaner; and perhaps even if it does not make us better, it is justified on the ground that it spares the world some of the unpleasant things of life. But it leads to the worst misfits in partnerships and unions of people of all sorts.

We severely condemn others for verbal fic-

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tions when we know we are introducing fictions into our daily lives all the time. We even go farther and usually try to justify our own verbal fictions. For to each set of people, each society and cult, there are certain subjects on which it is a question of the highest honor to tell the exact truth, while on others lying seems as easy as following a natural law. Within a certain set, for example, cheating at cards is a most heinous offense; while cheating in a college examination is a good joke, and constructive lying as to a college escapade is done as a matter of honor. It all depends on whether it is the individual or the class conscience that is touched, for each may reverse the falsehoods as well as the virtues of the other.

Many people habitually, and as a general course of conduct, act in an uncandid manner. It is logical to trace the beginning of such a habit to the momentary joy it somehow gives to act thus. But uncandor does not nakedly give even momentary joy. It is pleasant only when apparently clothed with power to protect some selfish interest; otherwise, when it ministers to our egoism. When the scales chance to fall from our eyes we see that our uncandor is a varnished sort

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of lying which is always doing us harm, and has no justification but cowardice and conceit. The scales fall easily enough the moment we learn of them—only this is usually the tardiest of all our learning. The temptation is insidious and strong to vary from the truth for one's own temporary gain; it is an untaught spontaneous trick of many of us from childhood, and we do it as naturally as we breathe. But it is a trick that gets us more or less into trouble and ought to be fought as original sin and essential wickedness. That, broadly speaking, truth consists with the universe and pays best in the end, nobody disputes. What, in each of life's ever changing settings, the paramount truth may be, is the one great half-solved question of our existence.

If you examine the subject from all sides and with all the facts available, you will, I think, come to this conclusion inevitably, that to tell the vertical truth always, even within the proprieties, is one of the fine arts. Probably few persons attain to it absolutely, and still keep their force of character. Those who pretend to do it, and always try hardest to do it, are like the man who, in his attempts to stand up straight, tips backward. In order to accomplish this

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feat we would need to be mechanical, like adding or voting machines which, by their cogs and contrivances, are proof against errors. But we can never transform ourselves into such machines, and if we were able to, the accomplishment would not be wholly good; for it would shut out imagination, which is the talent that may be said to move the world.

We cannot abolish imagination. As long as we struggle and work we must imagine first; we must picture the thing to be striven for, before the striving, and the pictures make the striving easier and life's burdens lighter. Our ambitions for material things, for human loves and for goodness, are all pictures before they are ever—if ever—realized; and we must imagine and struggle through life, until the final picture. Imagination makes beauty and joy, but it makes inaccuracy and untruth also. It leads us often to cross over the line of truth into the domain of fiction that verges on falsehood, and to many kinds of checkered conduct. However we may strive, we cannot completely avoid this domain. We should never forget that others, as well as ourselves, fail to escape it, that most men always have failed and always will fail.



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Hence the failure is one that we must sometime, and in some measure, condone. It is a mean thing to try to justify our own peccadillos on the ground that we share them with good company or any company. The right thing is to hold ourselves responsible, while we try to excuse others, for this is the only magnanimous course. It is the only one capable of making the world better. For it encourages that kind of charity we are always short of; and lessens the unworthy egoism of which we always have enough and to spare.



## Man as An Air-Eating Animal



## Man as An Air-Eating Animal

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Nature has for us a multitude of surprises. The thing that we are not looking for is often the thing we find. We expect to discover the thing that seems most obvious and natural, that is most apparent. The tree grows out of the ground, therefore the ground produces it. Leaves grow on it for some purpose of evident necessity to the tree; but in just what way they are necessary and what they do, and how, are questions that only occasionally concern us. We see plants grow and pile up, in their seeds, food for our bodies, and are glad and fortunate; but if we think on the subject without exact information it is usually to imagine that these food products come up out of the earth totally, like the trees.

So we reach the thought that all animals as well as ourselves have come up out of the earth wholly, either directly or indirectly, as we seem to go back to the earth finally and wholly. To say that man is an

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air-eating animal, a sort of orchid on the face of the earth, seems at first thought to be quite absurd. But to a large degree this is literally true, and the fact is fraught with great interest.

No adequate conception of this thought is possible except by an understanding of one material substance, through which directly or indirectly this mystery is largely wrought out. That substance is starch; and its part in the phenomena of animal and human life is one of extreme importance.

The first impression that the word starch makes upon the casual mind is of an insipid, odorless, white, grocer's stuff, formed originally into little masses, almost as regular in shape and as uniform in size as crystals and at a distance looking much like them. All know that it may be pulverized into a white powder, and that it is made sometimes from grain, sometimes from potatoes, and incidentally that when elaborated out of corn it makes a passable pudding. The mucilaginous material which results when this substance is mixed with hot water is also known as starch. This, because it gives stiffness to a piece of cloth, has come to be in our estimation of the moral qualities of people, a sort of synonym for firmness

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and stability in general. The word has grown into use colloquially as a gentler expression for vigor and incisiveness, as "sand" has come rather crudely to mean back-bone and a larger courage. They are useful vulgarisms, like snap and pluck, and their very currency testifies to the popular admiration for the attributes they signify. For at all times, in sunshine and storm or peace or war, next to unselfishness and generosity, the quality that is most sure of the applause of everybody is that expressed by the word courage.

But starch has a larger meaning. It is a substance perfectly definite in its chemical composition, and is the most universal food of man and animals. It is the food of the man directly; indirectly, it is his food received through the bodies of animals which he eats. The animals build up their bodies to a large degree from the starch which their fodder gives them. Starch forms a part of all vegetable growth and its elaboration is a large part of the purpose of all vegetable life. It is found pre-eminently in the leaves which are the producing and digesting parts of all plants, and here it is produced, with some sugar and often with some gummy substance, to be

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distributed for the plant's life purposes. It is even more deposited in the seeds which furnish food for animals and people. Here it constitutes a store of nutriment to be used in the development of the new plants in their growth, from the beginning of the germination of the seeds; and it or some chemical congener forms a proportion of the substance of the woody fibre of all plants. Among the greatest of nature's reservoirs of starch are those in the roots, bulbs and tubers of certain plants, where with more or less sugar it retreats from the dangers of winter and the environment above ground. These reservoirs are drawn upon by the plants and especially by the young germinating ones in the spring time. The sweet sap of the maple tree is one of many examples of the stored-up sugar dissolved in the water of the earth and forced up beneath the bark of the tree in spring time, forced up by the roots, for use in the growth of the tree.

Starch and its allied products of sugar of various kinds, otherwise carbo-hydrates, constitute about 56 per cent. of the best arranged dietary of the human race; the albuminoids, including the meat, milk and eggs, only amount to a little over 22 per



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cent. while the pure fats, both animal and vegetable, are substantially 16 per cent. The salts derived originally from the earth are about 5 per cent. Thus only a minor proportion of other foods besides starch are really needed. The experience of the Chinese well shows in how large a proportion starch may serve as a food for the body. A small particle of meat, especially fat meat, with a bowl of starch makes the Chinaman's meal, and it is a physiologic diet. He frequently adds a little dried fruit or some fresh vegetable, but if he could possess himself of a little raw milk for one meal each day he might even do without any of these. And yet we occasionally hear an educated person seriously inquire if there is really any nourishment in a cracker, when he well knows the cracker is made of wheat flour, and ought to know that the major ingredient of the latter is nothing but starch.

The composition of starch, the sugars and the fats is the same, as to the chemical elements which compose them. They are all made of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. The starch contains six parts of carbon, ten of hydrogen and five of oxygen, and the wide physical differences between sugar,

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starch and fat, are due to slight variation in the proportions of the elements named. One of these substances is often changed to another in the body by the chemical forces of the physiologic laboratory. But the change is in one direction only; starch becomes sugar of several forms; sugar makes fat; fat may make sugar, especially in certain diseases, but neither sugar nor fat is ever changed back into starch. Starch once digested never becomes starch again, but passes into various chemical substances that go to form the tissues of the body, and that are used up in the functionation of the organs.

The first step toward the change of starch into sugar in the human body occurs in the mouth in eating. The stomach is not the beginning of the human laboratory of digestion. This process, as far as starch is concerned, begins properly during the act of mastication and in plain sight. The slightest touch of the saliva to a cooked starch granule instantly transforms it chemically, and produces the first step toward making grape sugar, corn sugar, or glucose out of it. The secretions of the intestines, of the liver perhaps, and certainly of the pancreas further carry on this change, a change that always

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must occur before the starch can become incorporated into the tissues. So the saliva is a very important element in the nutrition of the body. As a major part of our diet is starch, if it can be mixed well with the saliva before entering the stomach, a large proportion of the digestion is accomplished at once. Hence the importance of the hygienic injunction to eat all starchy foods slowly and to insalivate them well. Foods of this kind in our common dietary are bread, and all bread stuffs, potatoes, beans, lentils and all mushes and the meals of every kind. If the starch digestion is not started in the mouth and well under way before the food reaches the stomach, it usually stops by the effect of the acids nearly always present in that cavity (acids being inimical to starch digestion), and must wait till it passes out, perhaps an hour afterward, into the intestines, where the fluids are alkaline in reaction, and where if at all the starch digestion is finished. Probably if the injunction to insalivate the starch-foods could be carefully observed by all the people, the dyspepsia among them would be reduced by at least a half.

Such in part is the story of the destruction of starch in the laboratory of the animal

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body and the upbuilding and sustenance of the tissues by it. But a story of no less interest is that of the laboratory wherein starch is created; where it is built up out of the elements of nature which are gathered from two opposite sources for this purpose. We have seen that there is starch in the seeds, the roots, the stalks and the leaves of plants. The proportion of it in these varies greatly and varies in each at different stages of the plant development. What is to-day starch in the seeds or fruit may to-morrow or next week become sugar by the chemistry of nature in the process of growing and ripening. In the grains the substance remains starch; in certain fruits, as the banana, it goes over into some form of sugar as the fruit ripens. The starch may be developed in the leaves to be transformed into sugar, or some other and allied substance that, being soluble, is carried in the plant circulation back beneath the bark or into the roots and bulbs to be preserved there for the needs of the coming year. Something like this, we are told, takes place in the ripened uncut grass; much of the nutriment has receded from the leaves and stalks, and gone back to the roots for safe-keeping. The immature grass is cut for hay while it holds

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the greatest amount of nutriment in its leaves, and when dried is better as fodder for animals; so, immature corn-stalks cut and dried are better than the older growth. There is least starch in the mature stalks and leaves, most in those which are cut while in the activity of their growth.

But where do the elements, carbon, hydrogen and oxygen come from to make the enormous accumulations of starch that we see in plants, especially in the fruits and seeds? Where does the plant procure them, and how is the union of them in this definite proportion brought about? In seeking an answer to this question, we discover that carbon is the essential element of organic chemistry and that it enters into the laboratory work of nature as nothing else does or can. And we cannot take even the first step in the study of plant chemistry without finding that the only thing necessary besides carbon (and the oxygen which is combined with it as the plant gathers it) to make starch, is water, and water is composed of the two elements of hydrogen and oxygen. The water comes from the earth and is sucked up by the minute rootlets of plants; it is carried, or rather pushed by the roots upward beneath their bark to the leaves.

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There it is united with the compound of carbon that is acquired from the atmosphere, and is elaborated into starch. The purpose of the leaves is to absorb carbon from the air as well as to elaborate it into other chemical substances. Carbon is never found pure in the air but always in combination as carbonic acid gas or carbon dioxid, which is composed of one part of carbon and two parts of oxygen. And this is the substance that is absorbed by the expanded leaf surface, and is all essential in starch elaboration.

This substance, so invaluable to plants, is often one of the contaminations of the atmospheric air for animal life. As it comes largely from decomposition of various organic substances and from the exhalations of the lungs of animals and people, we fairly conclude that other matters offensive to life go with it and in similar proportion; so we measure it to determine the degree of the offensiveness of bad air for respiration. Chemists have easy means of calculating the amount of carbon dioxid in the atmosphere, but very poor ways of determining the other contaminations. Where an atmosphere contains four parts of carbonic acid gas to ten thousand parts of air, it is

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not a contamination since that is substantially the proportion at the surface of the earth at the present time. In our houses and assembly rooms the proportion may be three or four times as much, and is then a contamination and detrimental to health. To prevent this is one of the purposes of ventilation. There is some reason to believe that away back in the centuries, millions of years ago, when plant life was at its most astounding development, and when probably the coal and oil that we are now using were produced, the proportion was very much greater. Perhaps a million years hence, instead of four parts there will be three in each ten thousand parts of air. When that time is reached it is only fair to assume that vegetable life will have become proportionately reduced.

The common conception of the usefulness of the soil is that it furnishes all the elements necessary to the growth of a plant. Nine people out of ten will tell you this. As a matter of fact it furnishes very few elements; really only water and the mineral salts which the plant demands. The one essential principle besides, namely carbon, is sucked in by the spread-out surfaces of leaves. And this is Nature's sole purpose

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in expanding so enormously the leaf-surface of plants; it is to catch enough of the four ten-thousandths of carbon dioxid in the air to satisfy the needs and requirements of the plant. If the proportion of carbon in the air were greater the leaf-surfaces might, for this chemistry, be less. Through the influence of sunlight and the green substance of the leaves known as chlorophyl there is elaborated in this marvelous leaf-structure, and out of the three elements derived from earth and air, the starch and sugar and allied substances of the plant. And it is the air that furnishes the only essential thing besides water, and this is one of the facts that reveal how it is that men and animals live on air and water.

The leaves must be spread out not only to catch the floating carbon, but the sunlight as well, and the ingenuity of plants in this particular suggests an intelligence that is almost human. The plants gather together for self-protection, but spread out their leaves for the sunlight, and if they are so close as to shut out the light too much they become pale and puny like those growing in cellars. For without the sun there is little chlorophyl and little determining plant digestion. The process does not go on at



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night, or goes on very slowly; so the house-plants fail to take up the carbonic acid gas from the atmosphere during the night, while they absorb it freely by day. And the day is the time when their aid is least needed; at night more people are in the house than by day, and they are usually breathing an atmosphere less fully replenished by ventilation, and often made worse by lamps and gas flames. Then is the time they most need some help, any help, that will free and protect them from the mephitic products of the exhalations from their own bodies.

It is one of the apparent miracles of nature that a soil can produce so enormous a growth of vegetation as it does, such tons of crops year after year, and with no appreciable change in the soil itself. But it is not miraculous, since, if the soil contains a due proportion of the phosphates and nitrates or allied salts and enough water, plant growth is never restricted. The atmosphere covers every soil, and its proportion of carbonic acid gas varies little. This one requisite nature surrounds the globe with in an almost unvarying proportion. If the supply is too much drawn upon at some place, or there is cast into the atmosphere by manufacturing establishments an enor-

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mous supply of it, the normal diffusion of this gas almost immediately makes the proportion everywhere equal.

The only re-inforcement soils require besides water is in the needful salts, hence the only value of compost and other fertilizers is in the fact that they may restore these substances to the earth. The great bulk of all the piled-up vegetable matter, the crops and all, comes from the air and the water, and absolutely all the starch and sugar are thus produced. Even the food tubers that grow in the ground, like the potato, have the same history; their starch is produced in the same manner. The carbon has come in originally from the leaves that have absorbed it; has traveled in some soluble form down into the earth and landed in the beautiful starch masses in the tubers.

But starch is not the only element of nature that man gets from the atmosphere for the building up of his body. We have seen that he must have nitrogenous food as well as starch and fats. The nitrogenous foods—the proteids as they are called—contain, besides carbon, hydrogen and oxygen, some nitrogen, sulphur and a few minerals, the chief distinguishing thing being nitrogen. These foods include flesh, milk, eggs

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and certain vegetables, as beans and peas, although the vegetable foods, especially the grains, contain a minor portion of nitrogenous material in addition to their starch. The nitrogen comes from the earth in the form of salts and is carried up by the roots in solution in the water. The decay and destruction of the bodies of plants and animals, and the excretions of the latter, restore nitrogen to the earth. But not all of the earth nitrogen is derived in this way; some of it, as we shall see, comes from the air.

Among the most essential forms of salt necessary for plant growth are those composed in part of nitrogen, and when we are told that the atmosphere is 80 per cent. pure nitrogen gas, and know that this substance and its combinations are so essential to plant life we wonder why it is that this gas does not materially lend itself to this scheme of plant upbuilding. But it refuses, as the ocean of salt water refuses to quench the thirst of a famishing man. Although the plant may die or dwindle for want of nitrogen, it never gets a particle of it directly from the atmosphere which surrounds it, although eight-tenths of the latter consists of this substance. But the plants

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have friends that wrest some of the nitrogen gas from the air to replenish the earth, so that the earth may in time replenish the plants. These friends are certain microbes, organisms which are microscopic in size, that burrow in the earth and which have the power of taking nitrogen from the air and making it combine with earth minerals, producing a chemical change by means of which the rootlets of the plant may be supplied with its requisite nitrogenous elements. These organisms are called nitrifying microbes, and they are encouraged by wise and thrifty farmers for their help to vegetable growth. They grow and thrive about the rootlets of certain plants, probably living largely upon them, and in a myterious way capture the atmospheric nitrogen for the soil, so that the plants may suck it up dissolved in water as they need it. The plants that most encourage these microbes are sometimes spoken of as nitrifying. Their rootlets furnish a good food for the micro-organisms. Swarms of minute nodules grow on the roots of these plants, and had long been a puzzle to scientists. Now it is known that these little bulbous bodies are the nesting places, the culture media, of the microbes; a sort of pathologic growth,

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like the warts on leaves that have been stung by certain insects. But whether or not this theory is correct, they do not seem to harm the plant on whose rootlets they grow. Maybe the increased amount of nitrogen salts they insure, more than counteracts any little injury they may do by violence to the roots. Certain forms of clover, and plants akin to it, belong to this class of nitrifying growths, and their seed is sometimes sown on poverty-stricken fields with no thought of harvesting a crop of hay or seed, but solely for the purpose of replenishing the soil. When this crop of convenience has reached a certain height it is destroyed and a profitable crop is started in its stead.

Farmers will therefore sow a field with some fertilizing clover seed and grow a crop to partial maturity and then, when the useful microbes have done their full work, plow it in so as to imbed in the soil every particle, not merely of the substance of the plant, but of its useful parasites as well. The soil is thereby enriched in nitrogen compounds, the nitrifying microbes are preserved for future service, and a profitable crop of grain or corn may then be raised from it.

Thus we see that man's chief food is

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starch, and that this mostly makes his body fuel, and directly or indirectly the sugar and fats he eats, and the fat he creates. This and the nitrogen compounds that are quite as essential, come mostly from the air. So he is an air-subsisting animal, a very orchid with legs and powers of locomotion. He despises carbon in the air because it is an index of the possible contamination of it. He thinks it poisons him if he breathes very much of it, and yet his very life depends upon it. Taken into his stomach in the form of starch and sugar and proteids it is elaborated into blood and tissue and so the body lives and thrives. Too much carbonic acid gas inhaled is certainly detrimental. Too little of it in the air for the plants and for man would starve the race. Combined with oxygen and hydrogen in starch and sugar it is digested in the body to make blood; and taken in effervescing water it merely pleases the stomach, but is never appropriated as food.

If the microbes were all suddenly taken out of the world, vegetable life would be at once greatly restricted, and it might lead to the partial or complete destruction of the race. For we are in many ways dependent for our very existence on the spontaneous

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efforts of little plants and animals that we usually forget about, and generally despise. The very clover whose roots encourage the microbes (a vegetable product) to nitrify the soil, and which is invaluable for that reason, would rapidly run out of existence were it not for the bees which, in stealing from its blossoms the material for their honey, unwittingly and unconsciously fertilize the flowers so that new seed may grow. Insects are indispensable to the life of a large part of the vegetable kingdom and a part that man makes extremely useful. We hate the microbes of tuberculosis and pus formation that kill off perhaps a fifth of the race, and devote lives of endless effort to circumvent and destroy them; yet we depend on microbes to connive at the creation of food for the whole race. We hate insects as a rule; they sting and bite and tantalize us; they carry malaria, yellow fever, and many other diseases into our blood; and we count that spot of earth blessed that is free from those that annoy us. But they are the unintentional and indispensable allies of plant growth by which we live.





## The Rewards of Taste



## The Rewards of Taste

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We envy the man who can be happy in an environment that we dislike or that distresses his neighbors. But his gift may be more dulness than a superior taste; when we are sure it is the latter, we doubly envy him.

To the farmer boy the goldenrod is a weed; and the sunflower is an ugly thing, only redeemed by the fact that its seeds are useful for the chickens. Later in life he sees the glory of each as a thing of beauty. The boy finds musical pleasure in rollicking crude tunes. When, years afterward, he first hears the overture of a great opera by a trained orchestra, it is a maze of sound to him, but not superior music. After a while he grows, and finds that he possesses a new world of thought and pleasure. Then this same music creates profound emotions within him, and as the climax of the piece is reached, his soul is lulled and elevated.

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Why should the first few notes of the Pilgrims' Chorus ever bring tears to the eyes of the lovers of true music? Why should a great audience of Americans instinctively rise as one man, and be for the moment welded into a oneness of spirit and purpose, the moment the band strikes up the Star Spangled Banner? It is sentiment, you say; but the music is its twin, and therein is the essence of the fact. It is because men see through the appearance of things to their deeper import—their spiritual meaning. The patriotic air instantly fires the mind with the picture of all the history of the nation and the struggles that made it, and bound the people together in love and devotion. A song of home has a similar mental effect, especially on those away from home. It is all due to a power of reading through the music, the word or the hint, to the idea, the history or the picture beyond. This is refinement, which, in the broadest sense, is a definition for taste.

The man who has this gift of seeing through and beyond is a philosopher, as well as a person of taste. He can do more than see the essence of things; and this latter power helps him to do more. One of the greatest of his further achievements is his ability to

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put behind him the petty annoyances from things and phases of things that usually worry people, and to find pleasure in what is left. Even disaster does not disturb him. He can make victory out of defeat. From the wreck of plans and failure of purposes he alone can gather all the salvage and be happy. His years have given him perspective or he has borrowed it of others; he can measure things at their true worth; he knows what to save and try to get joy out of, and what is dross to be thrown away. Better still, he knows how to throw away the dross, and can do it quietly, completely and without waste of energy. This is one of the greatest achievements of life.

It is the clear vision of good sentiment and taste that enables one to put away fretfulness, anger and chagrin; and this power is one of the things most to be coveted. The captious, hypercritical, jealous people who are forever nagged by trifles and violations of taste as they see it, never know the real meaning of the best taste. They are charlatans in taste. They are shocked by what they regard as the degenerate taste of others; but it is their own inability to be above annoyance by trifles that really troubles them. They are the victims, not of

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the crudeness of others, but of their own poverty and weakness. They are at the mercy of every sentimental wind that blows, and yet they think they have poise. They have, rather, the psycho-neurosis sometimes called hyperesthesia, or hysteria. They are ignorant of the great music of harmony and know little beyond that of technic; the bird songs at night jar their nerves, and the sounds of waters keep them awake. Trees, flowers and playing children are tame or troublesome, and the stars, the moon, and the sunrises and sunsets are old—they have seen them too often and too much. Words, thoughts, the rhythm of poetry and the swing of rhyme have no pleasure for them, because of some fancied flaw. They miss half the pleasures of a wholesome life by reason of their morbidness.

The best taste is the power to take and do the thing that profits most; and the meaning of profit has reference to both material needs and mental pleasures. They are about equally important; life is unsymmetrical or impossible with either left out. Success always means joy—as well as better food and clothes. So good taste, when it leads to success, is rewarded in a spiritual as well as a material way. And the spiritual re-

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ward is a sort of perpetual comfort; the mental comfort of success is one that lasts—it lasts for its own sake and for what success offers that may be needed; it also contributes to our egoistic enlargement, and that is enjoyable, whether it is profitable or not.

Good taste, otherwise good selection, leads us to do things not only for success, but because they are pleasant to do. It seeks out the things that profit, and lives on the pleasures of them. It minifies the things that offend; therefore, it must hate them. But it stops short of its own harm in hating them.

When the taste is distorted it often, to the harm of the individual, condemns things that are entitled to the highest consideration, since they are needed for ultimate success in human affairs. Taste that does this cannot be well-balanced, and it is not laudable. When a man who needs to economize, sells for a trifle, a thing that is needful for his business, solely because he hates the appearance of it, he shows bad taste. For he will pay twice as much for a similar thing that pleases him and serves him no better; and this is too great a price for the satisfaction of his esthetic sentiment. He has a pathologic exaltation of taste which

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is a hindrance to him, and he pays dearly for having it.

The best taste ignores the dirt, disfigurements and annoyances it cannot help, and that are unavoidably connected with life and living. Moreover, it reflects that many a thing called a nuisance is an essential part of the environment that we must become adjusted to, and ought for our peace of mind to be satisfied with. These things are part of the universe; we cannot expel them, but may be proof against their rasping, and can even get pleasure out of them if we will. Who sees the world as from a height knows that the noise of the elements and the tumult of children are normal parts of it; as the untidiness of men and children is also. Many good women lose half the pleasure of life because it is not natural for a healthy child to keep itself and its clothes clean; and it never occurs to them that their thinking it ought to be natural, may be comical to others. Such people have lost, if they ever had it, one of the largest elements of good taste—one of the greatest gifts to man, namely, a wholesome sense of proportion—which is another name for common sense.

Lack of proportion comes of excessive sensitiveness, a spirit of hyper-criticism or



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nervous erethism, which, being interpreted, means poor taste. Good taste represses and minifies all these, and thereby helps to bring us back to a better balance.

Taste, like truth, consists with the universe, and one of its greatest functions is to keep us adjusted to it. It leads us to try to order our lives, and seek our pleasures in accordance with law. Then we have least to complain of and most to be thankful for; our troubles are minified and our gains enhanced.

In proportion to a man's adjustment to the environment, to his harmony with law, and to his sense of the measure of things, will he see through the life conditions about him—see the essence of things, and be comforted. This comfort is one of the rewards of the taste that grows with the maturing of the mind. And the mind often matures slowly. As a rule, a man is incapable of the highest mental pleasure before he is forty; the limitations of his perspective as well as his tastes have restricted it before that time. After that age he looks back farther and measures things better; he knows better what to take and what to reject.

The man who has kept his spirit fresh, and developed a wholesome because a balanced

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taste, is supremely to be envied. His life is happier than that of the average man because of the greater joy-giving effect of everything that touches him, and the beauty he sees which others miss. Some others may see beauty more intensely than he, because of an exaltation of taste, but they have, as a great load of counterpoise, more aggravations than ever trouble him—annoyances that he never knows of because his optimistic serenity is proof against them.

This man has another advantage. He sees more of the good in people, and so is more likely to cultivate it in himself. Nor does he fail to perceive the defects of others; he knows them, but is unhurt by them. He knows them so well that he can see what part may be correctable, and what part it is useless to waste strength over; and so at least he is on a basis of common sense in his efforts to help. He is able to segregate that badness of humankind which is innate, unavoidable and connected with all life and living, and which grows out of the selfishness and conceit that the human race has so far been unable to dispense with. Much of it is as remediless as the unknowable is past finding out. The world is strewn with the wrecks of struggles to correct faults that are

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so innate as never to be removable. When in a few instances these are, by the greatest exertion, repressed a trifle, their lessening begets other faults as bad, if not worse.

Reformers need to have good judgment and weigh all the circumstances and conditions in estimating the good and bad, and what to attack and what to let alone. Good and bad are relative, not absolute terms, and are largely meaningless apart from their attendant circumstances. And the reformers are often sadly short-sighted in measuring circumstances.

An English author is said to have charged that Americans are devoid of good taste; and, doubtless they are, according to his standard. But the fact that he thought we have poor taste, while we think our taste is good, reveals a principle in human estimates that is interesting. He was a positive character, with fixed notions; he was also a most fastidious man. And when we are under the spell of fastidiousness we always have this difficulty, that as other people reveal qualities which are, in our experience, unusual, but do not antagonize our favorite ideas or our particular weaknesses, they are amusing; but if they antagonize us, and grate on our tender points, they have bad taste.

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A refined man holds his views of etiquette and the proprieties with great tenacity, and is very sensitive about them; his sensitiveness is proportionate to the intensity of his opinions. But such views belong to the field of esthetics rather than of principle; they are more fastidious than vital. We have the same difficulty with the English that the author had with us. Some of their exhibitions of taste are certainly bad.

If a man has such positive views about non-vital things, that in his calculation they are vital, it shows poor taste. For he is then holding them equal to things which, in the judgment of everybody, are matters of principle, like religion, honor and patriotism. When a man devotes himself to the study or practice of art in any form he is almost certain to become fastidious—for art is non-essential in the greater arithmetic of life; it is trifling when compared with the needs of bread, clothes, warmth and shelter, and safety from enemies. Our English critic was an artist in a particular line, and his estimates were sure to be colored a little by his excessive development in one direction. For his art his taste was correct; it gave him joy but it led him also into pain and discomfort.

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Our American taste fits our standards, such as they are, and it may discredit the acts and etiquette of other society and other peoples. Woe be to our comfort if we let our estimates weigh trifles as we do the conduct that tells for the weal and happiness of mankind. The final balance, the aggregate of the rewards of taste over its penalties, will always depend on the fitness of the taste. The dilettante taste, the exalted, over-critical sense of the embellishments of life, which forgets the things that make for comfort, strength, good cheer and long life, is sure to encounter many obstacles, and often come to grief. If we honor a man for his table manners more than we do for his honesty, kindness and industry, we shall experience a frequent jar to our nerves, and we ought not to be surprised at it.

Our tastes differ in their rewards as they do in their impediments. One of the most picturesque among them is that for pets among the lower animals, and especially for small dogs. This is a passion that belongs to women mainly, and it is probably a fact that as this taste increases, that for children grows less.

The taste for domestic animals begets kindness toward them which is always

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commendable; and the poodle phase usually goes with benevolence to all animals, and a horror at seeing them injured or abused. It indicates also a rather fastidious taste in general, even if not a very cultivated or educated one.

In an extreme degree it usually belongs to people of considerable leisure; indeed it seems to be, in the estimate of many, rather inconsistent with serious occupation. It bespeaks a leisured class as the carrying of the fan by men in China does. Yet this taste gives comfort to those who have it, if not to their neighbors, and it is one that can be easily gratified. It is really a childhood taste carried into adult life, for nearly all children, especially all girls, like little dogs—it is next to their love of dolls, and is an expression of the mother instinct that is so universal and so noble. One of these two phases of the taste outgrows the other as the child matures, and so the governing bent of the woman is established. If the doll taste thrives the more, the grown-up taste is for children and childhood; if the dog taste waxes stronger, it becomes the poodle propensity of adult womanhood.

The two shades of the taste are alike in giving more or less pleasure; they probably

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differ somewhat in the degree which they bestow; and it can hardly be doubted that the taste for children gives a greater aggregate of enjoyment. But then it has disadvantages. It is expensive and often troublesome; the dog taste costs less and is less encumbering, and it can be indulged without interfering with other pleasures. This last is the true test of the rewards of any taste—that they can be had with the fewest drawbacks. The drawbacks curtail the rewards. Tastes that bring joy with few inconveniences are, other things being equal, the ones to seek. But that other things shall be equal is a vital condition.

Should people of a strong taste that gives pleasure disparage those of a different preference? Must we insist that all shall find profit in the thing that most profits us? Some women who have joy in their children have an unconcealed contempt for those of the dog taste, and think they ought to be in better business than acting as grooms, dressing maids and chaperons for small dogs; while the dog lovers commiserate the other women for the giving of themselves soul and body to their children, who often poorly repay them for their devotion.

The love of childhood is, of course, infi-

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nitely above the other in spiritual quality and value to the race. But in the absence of the higher one the love of a cat or dog is not ignoble; it gives as genuine pleasure, if of a lower order, and ought not to be begrudged to those who have it, by others more fortunate. Besides, it is relatively harmless to the community; with the parrots eliminated, the pet animals are probably less annoying to the neighbors than children are. Nor are the two tastes wholly inconsistent; they are often indulged together, the pet animals being enjoyed with the children and by the children. The dog is the companion and playmate of the child; and the dog shows a measure of attachment, forgiveness and constancy toward his human friend, that often shames us for our conduct toward each other.

The taste for good literature is one of the most satisfying; and, now that the public has made such lavish provisions for its free distribution, has become one of the most inexpensive. No one in a town or city but can read for the asking the best books of the world.

The books most sought and read by the people are works of fiction, and the character of their pleasure in the stories they read



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is a lesson in itself. It is, in large part, the young-old passion of the race—the love between the woman and the man—that clothes the story with an interest which never grows stale to people of any age or condition. Any girl or woman, boy or man can live over that story by going to the public library and borrowing a love tale for nothing. And many people do it.

We not only enjoy the fiction, but our imagination, if not our discrimination, clothes it with lessons that are the reflection of our minds, and this process is a pleasure. After we have read into a story several far-reaching purposes of our own creation, it is sometimes a little shock to us to have the novelist himself say that the story was written solely to amuse his readers and to sell the book.

Similar tendencies appear with other products of art. We are likely to weave into them motives beyond what the artist saw and meant; as truly as we sometimes fail to see all the purpose he says he has put into them. It gives us pleasure to do these things. We not only enjoy the novels and the art, but we enjoy the consciousness of our perspicacity. That we make mistakes is of little moment; the average is perhaps

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about correct. We read into the works enough non-existent virtues to counterbalance our unjust criticisms, and so a fair balance is struck.

Taste not only gets us into trouble, but it often gets us out of it, and is a power for growth and progress toward happiness. We like cleanliness—clean things, clean clothes and houses—and it takes the place (in the fastidious mind) of money and fine clothes, and even of fine food. If there is some penalty in this there is great reward also. The thought that she has clean clothes clear down to a clean skin gives many a woman such joy as riches alone could never bestow.

But some take their joy only in appearing to be clean and neat. I once knew such a woman; attractive in outward appearance—a woman who talked much of the society in which she had formerly moved. When on an occasion the filth beneath her outer clothing was discovered by one whose good opinion she prized, she for a moment showed a trifle of embarrassment—but only for a moment. Her sense of the grandiose came to her rescue promptly, and gave her a cheap sort of solace; it drove the embarrassment out of her mind, and she was serene.

Probably the greatest reward of taste in a

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large way is shown when a new impulse or an elevation in sentiment raises one's standards and enjoyment of life in many directions. Examples of this phenomenon are common enough. A boy suddenly acquires a liking for the good opinions of those whom he greatly respects; that is, he has a new taste, a new point of discrimination, a new sense of choice. This leads him to change, sometimes suddenly and without his knowing it, his whole course of life, for the purpose of ministering to the new taste.

When this occurs a new member of society has suddenly appeared, and the world is better for it. From living regardless of others, and being selfish and egoistic, he becomes a reformed being and lives thereafter by a sort of altruistic egoism, to his own infinitely more satisfying pleasure, and to the lasting benefit of others. This example is not far-fetched, but is typical of a long list of slightly variant experiences among all sorts of men, women and children, especially children.

Hardly a finer example of the wonderfully reforming influence of a new taste, to elevate and change the life of a human being, could be found in all history, than that described by Booker Washington in

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his experiences with the cruder specimens of colored children at Tuskegee. He long sought for incentives to arouse these pupils to a higher civilization. It was a slow and difficult process; their uncivilized ways were automatic, and had been ground into them by generations of experience, and by all the examples of their own people. But they were teachable and obedient, and would follow instructions as well as they could, and so appear civilized. Only that did not satisfy the great teacher and reformer; there could be no essential increase in civilization till they should come to love it, and make it a part, not of their mimetic conduct, but of their automatic lives. How to create this was the problem, and numerous expedients were tried in the effort to start a desire for higher things. One desire, even if it were a minor or trivial one, would be a fulcrum to lift the personality to higher levels.

Some of the efforts succeeded a little, some much, some were apparently fruitless. His joy was found if he could see any improvement in the upward direction. And the taste he found most potent in arousing a pupil to better things, and helping toward other tastes that would elevate, was that

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involved in the ownership and use of an individual tooth-brush. If he could see a child have a pride and satisfaction in owning and using, and using exclusively, this instrument of physical purity he felt certain of the future of that child. For it was sure to develop other tastes that would lead to conduct helping to a life of more usefulness, and therefore more happiness for the individual. To be scrupulous about his own tooth-brush meant a sense of ownership and of personal purity. This would develop into a widening sense of ownership and providence, and therefore of property—which is one of the greatest needs of these handicapped people. More, it would by the same growth lead to a lessening of the foolish egotism and love of cheap display that are normal to a large number of these people, for such emotions are incompatible with the growth of the other qualities. Spendthriftiness and love of display are twin weaknesses, and must go down before the rising strength of a true taste for economy, and respect for self rather than respect for show. And this is the exact way the problem worked out practically, and always must work out.

I once knew of a schoolboy who had come

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to town from his home in the country, with his language full of rural idioms and crudities, and with figures of extravagant speech. He was struggling along with his studies as such boys must, and with poor perception of his shortcomings, when he attended a teacher's convention held in the town, and heard a college professor lecture. It is immaterial what the subject of the lecture was, it was the language that riveted the boy's attention, and it was a revelation to his mind. The words were simple and terse, and chosen for fitness and perfect accuracy. Their temperance and precision were an inspiration to him. The result was that the boy awoke to a sense of language as an instrument of expression, that he had not dreamed of before. He had been born to a new taste, and it colored all his life thereafter.

On this taste other tastes were built; he could not admire precision and fitness in language without desiring similar precision in other things, or without loving the fact and idea of precision. All this meant scholarship; and love of accuracy grew into a taste for scientific truth; for science deals with precise statements and ideas. And taste in the speech of men grew into a better

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discrimination for the things about which men write and speak. Thus from this simple incident dated the most far-reaching and beneficial changes in a human life; whereby it was illuminated by a refinement unpredictable at the beginning, as it touched other lives in numbers and ways that could not be estimated.

Life is toil, but it ought not to be all toil. Everybody needs something beyond the drudgery of daily labor. Some recreation is a necessity to the best work and the largest usefulness and happiness. To know how to relax and get relief of mind after toil is almost as important as the toil itself; and whoever can do it finds his labor easier and more effective. His strength is greater, and it lasts longer.

There are men who have never learned how to do this; men of force and capacity; men who are potent in the affairs of the world; men who have made fortunes and who have swayed thousands by their eloquence or their example,—yet, on going out of business, or when displaced by some accident from the tread-mill of their industrial lives, these men are like lost sheep. They have no resources but the routine of business, no intellectual refuge but shop

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and shop-talk; their fortunes even are almost useless to them for any satisfying pleasure.

They may keep their bodies strong by exercise and field sports — these have done wonders for the health of many men and women run down by too long or too intense attention to business, or by household or social duties. Such outdoor diversions are in every way to be commended, for they mean exercise in ways unusual to the daily routine, and mean fresh air and sunshine and tan. They have prolonged the lives and improved the mental balance and temper of hundreds of people, and have saved to the community many fold more of value than they have cost.

But these helps are not enough. It is not sufficient that a man has mental pleasure in his golf while he is playing, or in thinking afterward of the good strokes he has made, or in the anticipation of games to come. The vacations to the country or the sea for the summer, a perfect change in occupation, and freedom for a few weeks from the cares of business are always helpful, and in our division of labor and the loading of every man with more or less monotony in work, it is every one's natural due to have such a vacation. Only such



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luxuries are not sufficient. They give pleasure and bring strength; but their satisfaction is like that from eating when hungry, or resting when tired or sleeping after a day of fatigue. It is like fresh air and sunshine after hours of work in a shop or office with a stuffy atmosphere. It is as delightful as a drink of cool water to a famishing man, but it is not in any high degree intellectual or spiritual; it is in a necessary and marked way physical,—and this only.

Every man needs some resource for recreation that is intellectual and spiritual, and that points the way to loftier things and a wider sphere. It ought to be one that can be enjoyed at any time, in the midst of work, at the noon hour, after dinner by the lamplight; anywhere and at any time when there is a lull in the mental tension of the day's duty or the day's stent. It may fill in some of the gaps in the minutes that are usually devoted to personalities,—the craze for trifles of the doings of people, which some of the journalism and literature of the day encourage, and which the trivial tendencies of our minds cultivate.

This thing that ought to be interjected into the life of a man for his rest and pleasure is some side-issue for his mind, some

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object of study or play, some find even, to be pursued as an avocation year after year. It may run along with his regular vocation, never hindering but rather helping the latter, never costing much, always pleasing—a refuge from worry, and a relief from the exasperating cares of his calling. It may be art, music or literature; or systematic kindness or helpfulness to others, or it may be some of the sciences, or the collecting of facts of history or objects of interest. Whatever it is, it is elevating to the mind and makes for higher rather than lower things.—and it has no drawbacks of regret, and makes no remorse. Like the perfecting of ourselves in an art or in some useful knowledge, or like doing good without the hope of a return of any kind, it leaves after it no bad taste in the mouth and no sting in the soul.

What the avocation shall be, how high soever it shall rise, depends on the taste of the individual. It will be as high as the taste—no higher. And there is no finer example of a richly earned reward of taste than this. None other better shows how well-directed and well-cultivated taste can minister to the comfort of mind and body, and contribute to a happy longevity.

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Most men who have fads and avocations take them up by accident; some chance experience or observation starts their minds in the new channel. Help may come from the pursuit of them when begun in this way, as truly as if they had been planned deliberately, but it is not so certain to come, and the elevation of the mind and spirit averages less. The greatest gain is assured when the avocation is selected deliberately, with a view to its refining influence as well as to the pleasure its pursuit may give.

The best taste in the selection is rewarded by the largest return. And the best will usually keep the avocation a true side-issue, and prevent it from swamping the resources and interfering with the business of life, unless perchance it gives promise of being able to rise and become life's chief business. There have been cases where an avocation was most disastrous to a career. It spoiled the regular business and could give the man nothing adequate in its place; and its end was a life of bitterness and regret. Such are the results of poor and uncontrolled taste,—it is always a poor taste that fails to govern the conduct and direct the life.

There are other exceptions to the rule, where the avocation has grown to be the

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vocation of life, and where fame and fortune have come to the man, and benefit to the world. Huxley and Joseph Le Conte started in life as surgeons. Numerous authors and scientists who have made noble additions to the common stock of knowledge, began in other careers which were dropped for the larger work.

It is the right of every man to have his feelers constantly out for a vocation that is more to his liking and that promises more for his future. And if he can grope for a new field by means of the profit of some avocation, he is wise. With old-world restrictions this is less possible; but here in America such a course is not only possible but altogether commendable. Many a man has borne cheerfully the burden of a changeless and never-ending task, because he had such a refuge. It transfigured his life because it pleased and dignified him. And if one can find through such a diversion a better avenue for his major energy, and grow into a vocation that is at once more congenial than the one he leaves, and profitable enough to give him and his dependents the comforts of life, he deserves universal approval.

Many a housewife finds the drudgery of

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her domestic life a good deal of a prison; and her keepers are not always kindly. Perhaps she has no companionships at home that are mentally above her toil, or capable of lifting her above it. What a blessing if she can, by some pursuit of thought, lift herself into a better realm as she goes on with her cares! Without such a pursuit she is sure to waste her surplus energy, if she has any, in trifles, personalities, regrets and chagrin. But some study, or reading; some occasional meeting with other women of like tastes, for conference and comparison, may give her a new and better mental realm to live in, and take her out of prison and into the day. Then her domestic life ceases to be a prison; its duties are less irksome and are performed with cheerfulness.

It is only by the gift of sentiment that the hard grind of daily work can be relieved. This and this alone can, within the walls of a tread-mill, create a picture gallery or a cathedral, and make a symphony seem real.

A farmer boy worked in the hay field in the heat and sweat of the summer days. He did the work that was before him; did it faithfully and without grumbling. He did it without bitterness or any protest of vanity. But he was only half there; his spirit was off

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to the academy or the college that he had never seen, and he was doing the grander work of life that so far had only filled his admiring imagination. Two results followed; he had pleasure in the fancy that was only second to the reality; and the pursuit of his taste brought him, in his maturity, both knowledge and wealth. He came to feel the uplifting and responsibility of that power which he had day-dreamed about while at work in the hay; and through the far-reaching influence of the bye-pursuits, begun in the midst of this boy's toil, he came to the rewards of a larger career.

# The Psychology of the Corset





## The Psychology of the Corset

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It is a rare mind that can habitually and wholesomely regard human beings entirely apart from the clothes they wear. Some physiologists, philosophers and dreamers are able to, but only they. Carlyle considered the subject of clothes in a masterful and unique essay; tried to conceive people both clothed and naked, and in every sort of psychologic relation, but it has not influenced thought at large very much.

Throughout history the mental picture of humanity has mostly represented it as clothed. By nature utterly naked, to our minds' eyes our clothes are as truly a part of us as though they were fleeces of wool grown upon our skins. We even dispute as to whether it is right to consider the human body in any other way, and sometimes fear our youth may go wrong if they see the nude form in cold marble or bronze or on harmless canvas. We occasionally

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shut such things out of public places, and fence the rising generation away from them.

The way in which the simple and pure-minded folk in the country districts of Japan have at times ignored the requirements of clothes has startled, if not shocked, many good souls of our civilization when they have witnessed it for the first time. To the reflecting mind it shows what strenuous importance we attach — and usually without knowing it—to the covering of the body. Such shocks awaken us to the philosophic as well as the hygienic relations of clothes.

Next to the general subject in interest is the fact, at first seemingly unjustified by reason, that the two sexes must always be clothed differently. So rigid and pervading is this rule that we stop to gaze and remark, if at any time custom permits identical garments to be worn by both. Yet they belong to the same species of living things, and have similar physical needs and dangers. And surely their differing work and functions in life cannot make so sweeping a disparity in clothes necessary. There must be some other reason, as there is for the great amount of time and attention people give to dress.

Garments, therefore, have great meaning

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in many ways, and differing meanings; the garments of each sex have. But it seems to me that no other article worn by either sex has a significance so peculiar and weighty as that of the corset. It has an influence on those who wear it and on the rest of mankind as well. It relates to the longevity and mental traits of the wearers, and of the generations of men that follow each other.

It is now exclusively an article of woman's wear, although at times, in Europe, it has been used by a few men. Its origin dates back almost to the escape of the race from barbarism, if not even farther, and it has experienced numerous changes in form and size, as fashions have changed. Formerly it was a heavy and cumbersome affair, but the inventions and mechanical skill of the closing century have developed a lightness, grace and cheapness never dreamed of by the dames of an earlier time.

The desire of womankind to shape the female figure according to standards of beauty must have begun almost with the savage. In the ruins of Palenque, in Mexico (of which there is not a scrap of written history), was found in stone a bas-relief of a woman with bandaged waist. Circular and transverse folds and loops—strips of

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cloth used to compress the form—are clearly shown in the sculpture.

In the eastern archipelago, at discovery, young women were found wearing a corset of spirally arranged cones of rattan. They wore this garment till their marriage. In Java women eat clay to keep thin. In Ceylon there are books devoted to the subject of how to train slender waists. Among some of the authorities on the subject it is held that the world-wide standard has been a waist that can be clasped by the two hands. Circassian ladies formerly wore—if they do not still do it—corsets made of morocco, and wore them by night as well as by day. The Hindoos insist that woman's waist should be slim. The Chinese, almost alone, bind the feet and let the waist grow as it will.

In the ruins of Egypt and Thebes no corsets have been found figured, but in the book of Isaiah (III, 24) occurs a declaration that there shall be "instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth, and burning instead of beauty." A stomacher is a rigid, vertical stomach board, worn for a similar purpose as a corset. Homer, 560 years before Christ, refers to the cestus or girdle of Venus, as worn by Juno to increase her

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"personal attractions." Terence, the Roman dramatist (160 B. C.), refers to ladies who "saddle their backs and straightlace their waists to make them well-shaped."

Strutt says Roman women wore a bandage about the waist called strophium. Various other names have been used at different times to convey the same idea, as zone, mitra, cestus, stays, bodice, busk and corset. Before the conquest of Rome by the Hunnish tribes ladies wore, so it is written, "a kind of corset which they tightened very considerably." After this period of human history, the subject was buried from literature, as perhaps from human thought, for many generations.

Queen Elizabeth wore a corset made of nearly solid metal. So did Catherine de Medici. Busks of wood, iron and ivory were much worn before the end of the fifteenth century. Their effects were severe and harmful. These old, rude affairs sometimes made deep excoriations of the skin. Said an old writer: "What hell will not women suffer, strained and lasted to the very quick," "to make their forms thin as a Spaniard's!"

But this iron and board cuirass disappeared at the time of the French revolution,

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to be followed by the lighter articles of these later days. In 1829, a Boston writer says, women even wore corsets in bed all night, and tightened them on lying down, and again on rising in the morning. Servants often wore busks that prevented them from bending over.

While fashion orders what in general the corset shall be, the inventive skill of manufacturers to some extent leads or guides the fashion. To consider all the forces that influence fashions would involve an inquiry far too broad for the present study.

The corset of to-day, as worn about the waist between the outer and under clothing, reaches from near the arm-pits to the hips and below. It fits the form with various degrees of snugness, depending on differing circumstances that influence the wearer, but it rarely fits loosely. The pressure which it exerts on the body has been measured with instruments of precision, and found to be on an average slightly over six-tenths of a pound to the square inch, or from twenty to seventy pounds in the aggregate. The average difference in the circumference of the waist with and without the corset, is about two and one-half inches; and the vital capacity of the lungs as machines for

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breathing is lessened by corset wearing, about twenty per cent.

The corset is made to adjust itself to the form at any degree of pressure, by lacing-strings at the back. It has very distinct physical effects upon the body, and on the physiology of the wearer, as well as upon her anatomy and form. First of all, it sustains the body; it is an outside skeleton that the wearers are apt to declare to be of great assistance in maintaining the erect posture comfortably; it is a convenience for the fitting of garments about it, and for sustaining the clothing of the lower extremities. If it is worn rather loosely, it perhaps does not interfere in any way with the ordinary physiologic functions of the body; but, drawn too firmly, as the fashion has sometimes required—or seemed to—it compresses the waist and forces the ribs inward—the lower ones especially—to such a degree as to make severe pressure along a transverse line of the liver. This creates a permanent depression or shallow groove along the upper (or front) surface of that organ, causing more or less degeneration of its tissue—the *schmur Leber* of the Germans. Above and below this line the liver may appear like two tumors. The organ thus changed

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is harmed for functionation, and permanently impairs the health of the individual.

Tight lacing also interferes with respiration to some degree; it compels the breathing to be done by the upper part of the chest almost solely, for it is quite impossible to contract the diaphragm and so force downward the organs below it, as in abdominal breathing, without causing discomfort in the viscera of the upper abdomen by the violent movement of them up and down. With a narrowed waist the vertical excursion of these organs in each act of ordinary breathing is twice as great as with a normal waist. If these movements are attempted the labor of respiration is found to be so great, and the churning of the squeezed liver and stomach so uncomfortable, that no woman would think of keeping it up as a habit. The upper chest breathing is, under these circumstances, so much easier and more restful, that it is practiced automatically.

Tight lacing, too, interferes with the action of the stomach, intestines and liver, in the process of digestion; it often provokes palpitation of the heart, and forces downward, to their harm and inconvenience, the organs of the abdomen and pelvis. As a consequence of these various disturbances



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in people who wear the corset too tight, it occasionally happens that faintness and even swooning occur when the nervous system is over-wrought and the body depressed by some other condition of bad hygiene, as breathing the air of a crowded room or auditorium, or eating too much or of indigestible foods. Waist pressure also, to some degree, retards the return of the blood from the lower extremities, and so conspires to produce varicose veins (mostly below the knees, but occasionally reaching to the hips), a disease that is always uncomfortable and tiring, and sometimes fraught with serious consequences.

It should not be understood that these profound symptoms are always or even generally produced by the wearing of the corset. They are sometimes so produced, with the gravest injury to the wearer, and the lives of some women—many in the aggregate—are darkened by invalidism lasting through years, or are cut short by death, owing to lesions started in this manner. It is at the same time true that the corset may be loosely worn through life by a healthy woman of good vigor, with no serious injury to her health or longevity, or to the health of her children. Such a woman,

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so clothed, will usually outlive the average man, and have fewer days of sickness. And it is grossly untrue to say that the corset thus worn by such a woman, is as harmful to the wearer and her progeny as the foot-binding among Chinese women. Such a statement could only be true of unhealthy and unvigorous women, who require the best hygiene as a constant condition of any adequate career.

There is one possible hygienic reason for wearing the corset. It seems to be proven that fewer women than men have pulmonary consumption. In a majority of cases this disease begins in the apex of one lung. Why should not the apices of women's lungs be as susceptible as those of men? The upper chest breathing favored by corset wearing has been offered as a tentative answer to the question. Perhaps it is correct; but even if it is, this can only in a small part atone for the injury the corset has otherwise done the race.

But the physical effect of the corset, or the abuse of it, has been often exploited and much discussed, and there is little or nothing new to be said about it. It is like any other habit of the people that is begotten of fashion—everything else in the life of the

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individual becomes, somehow, adjusted to it. The habits of womankind are not likely to undergo any radical change in this particular, and no amount of preaching that health missionaries may do will lead to any great alteration or improvement in the clothing of the race. The clothing will change from time to time, and perhaps for the physical benefit of the people, and the corset will change with the rest; we can even imagine it to be laid aside, and to go out of use. But the changes will come through example, and not from precept or persuasion. The arguments for change will be sociologic or psychologic, not hygienic. The psychologic phase of the subject is the most interesting one, and the one usually neglected or forgotten. The very suggestion that there can be such an aspect of it will seem absurd to many persons. But the corset worn by the woman of modern society enters into her mental life in the most intimate way. She can no more get away from this fact than she could dispense with her lungs, or appear habitually on the street smoking a pipe. And unnumbered generations in the past have witnessed a like experience.

Every voluntary act of human life has its

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psychologic counterpart; we think the act while, or before, we do it. But not always to the same effect or in the same way. Many of our daily acts are matters of habit; if the habits are firmly fixed, their psychologic counterpart is more of an automatic nervous, than a mental, sort. Many of our habits and customs come without our consciousness—without our knowledge of how or why. Some of them we plan and determine. Impelled by something to create them, we start about it, and, little by little, by our volition and the repetition of the activities, they come into existence—the habits are formed. This is education in a broad way. But we stumble upon some of them; they come unbidden; they grow up by some unnoticed mental influence that is undirected and spontaneous. In the first case the psychologic counterpart precedes consciously; in the second the habit comes apparently first, and *seems* to develop the other, but does not, and is really created by it.

Mostly, our clothes are the result of custom—of fashion. We wear them because others do, or have worn them, and we never order the seasonal changes; they are ordered for us by others, whom we, in the

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main, are wholly ignorant of, by somebody—anybody—who can, like a new self-constituted ruler, get control of the masses. They are usually the shrewd and enterprising manufacturers and wholesalers of goods and clothes. We, the people, are as helpless in the arrangement of the styles we wear (except within comparatively narrow limits) as we are of the air we breathe or the temperature we endure. We are bidden, and near or afar off, like docile children, we obey; and, except the few who segregate themselves from the mass of people by their oddity, we obey as well as we can.

Why we do certain things, especially those that affect our personal weal and that of the community, constitutes a most interesting as well as a profitable study. But we can never completely solve the problem; it is so complex a task that we can only work toward a solution. And the ultimate genesis of fashions, and what they lead us to do and refrain from, make no inconsiderable part of the vast problem of our social existence.

Our daily acts may be divided, crudely, into those which concern the care and condition of our bodies, and those that connect us with others in the life and business of

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the world. Yet these two divisions are closely united to each other, and we can never estimate either of them entirely apart from the other. The nature and growth, the care and carriage of our bodies have to do first with our comfort mentally and physically, and therefore also with our relations to the world; and clothes are a large factor in the consummation.

Few things in the care of our bodies affect our weal more than our customs as to clothes. Clothes touch not merely the physical self, but the social and ethical life as truly. The foot-binding of the Chinese is a striking example, but none will say that the effect of the custom on the Chinese nation is confined to the bodies of the women whose feet are bound. It concerns as well their social and political relations, and determines, in many cases, their happiness or misery for life—physical pain if their feet are bound; social punishment if they are not. Attempts to do away with the custom have found their greatest obstacle in the social ostracism that threatens any woman who appears with normal feet.

The universal ambition is, of course, so to manage the human body, so to clothe, feed, groom and care for it, as to conserve its ex-

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istence and comfort for the longest time. In our efforts to do this we are guilty of many foibles and some sins, and the offences against the physical body sometimes tend, apparently, to spiritual growth, as physiologic care of the body may threaten social degradation. We are different from the Chinese; whether we are better than they is a question.

A study of the corset is instructive, as a study of the hats, shoes, gloves or collars of men would be, or the regulations of cookery and meal-times, or the kind of beds that people sleep in. But the corset is more instructive than these, because it is a device that touches more the psychologic life, and makes and unmakes its wearer in more ways.

If we consider the garment from the standpoint of its usefulness, we shall discover a number of interesting truths. They obtain with many other garments and ornaments, but not with all of them. One of the cardinal reasons for the corset is that it adds to beauty and grace of form. It is said that fleshy women show their embonpoint less if they wear a corset, which is a sufficient reason for them. Then, many women insist that convenience is a large consideration in favor of the corset; their skirts, the bands

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of which would otherwise annoy them, may be hung from it. The waist of a gown can be better fitted over it, and a well-fitting waist is the starting point of a harmonious costume. From it a skirt can be adjusted; and sleeves and various neck and throat decorations may be added—all of which would be unavailing with a shabby looking waist. Given one central and ideal element of grace and beauty in a costume and everything else may be made to harmonize.

But the most common reason a woman offers for wearing a corset, when it is suggested that she should lay it aside after years of use, is that it is a means of support for her body; that it is comforting to her sensations; that if she lays it aside she has a feeling of physical fatigue and lack of support that is almost unbearable. This argument is sound, without a question, for any woman who has worn a corset for a year probably finds that on laying it aside she feels a want of support that is always disagreeable and may be painful. Men as well as women have testified to this fact. A distinguished scientist of England many years ago wore a corset for a few months, and then discovered that it took him twice as many months to get used to doing with-



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out it. For long weeks he complained of a sensation as though his body was not quite strong enough to hold itself erect.

Fashion is the most potent reason for the corset. That the fashion had its origin largely in a desire for cosmetic effect, the conservation of beauty and grace, is true enough. But that is not what compels, although it may encourage, the adoption of this garment. It is the fact that others of her set, or those she would emulate, wear it, which compels nearly every girl to get herself into a corset at the earliest permissible age. Fashion inflicts upon us many degrees of slavery. The fashion once established must be followed, even if it binds our bodies or our feet, our throats or our hands. It requires a large order of courage to resist, even when the thing is harmful. And no argument for health is so irresistible as to be told that you look undressed or slouchy without a particular garment or style. Such a criticism is to many a soul as severe and heart-breaking as an accusation of black sin.

There are many standards of beauty. The shape of the corset, the artificial thing used to encase the body, constitutes one standard. The theory, of course, is that woman's form ought to have that particular shape; that it

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is the typical form and therefore ideal. The woman who possesses that ideal form needs no corset for beauty's sake. The corset is a standard, and its shape should be—and often is—based on that of the nude body which artists and anatomists have, with a fair measure of unanimity, agreed on as nearest perfection. That form is a thing of surpassing beauty, and no artificial covering of it can ever enhance its charm of lines. For its comfort, and that it should be hidden, clothes are required; but never for its grace or beauty.

The corset is evolved from a desire to perpetuate that form, and to give all an opportunity to simulate it. The woman who lacks the ideal form naturally covets it. To her it is a happy circumstance that she may wrap herself in an artificial case, and to the world actually display the charm she covets. Most of us live and labor under the load of some physical defect or asymmetry we would be glad to be rid of, to the end that we might more nearly approach the ideal physical body. It is a hump or a wart, or some angularity, or a vice of color or of hair. So, failing as most of us do, in the classical perfections, we take greedily to measures that allow us to simulate them.

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And could anything more happily accomplish this purpose than the corset? Once within it, the form has (if the corset is correct) all the right curves and proportions, and none of its own angles and imperfections. Of course, if we stop to reflect, we know this is, as to a great number, quite impossible; that inside the corset there often must be ugliness, but it seems otherwise—and frequently in our blundering day to seem is the instinctive end.

By good dentistry we can help a little toward the ideal; the razor may abolish an untidy beard; and we may, by waves and bangs cover up somewhat the defects we think we wot of in our own appearance. But hair-dye and beard-coloring are vulgar aids at best. We cannot hide our big feet and hands, nor straighten up our shoulders or backs; and our walking gait cannot by any possibility be hidden or much changed.

Skirts have fortunately restricted to the masculine half of us the public announcement of the deformity of bow-legs, and it is no wonder that woman should be ready to still further take advantage of her possibilities, and cover her body with the outward evidence of perfect symmetry and the ideal curves and proportions.

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Women have better and more trustworthy taste as to the lines of beauty than men have; they think of such things more than men can, and inharmony rasps their nature more. It is not strange then that they should be avid to appear to have the curves of the Venus that is the vision of us all. Here is a part of her form hidden from the world (save at fashionable functions); and woman may create for it, for the average sum of two dollars, the shape that is divine, and that shall delicately hint its presence through any and all drapery. She will do it, and to blame her for it is hardly generous.

I know the fashion may fail her in these efforts, and perchance her figure is such that she cannot accomplish all she desires in this way. But the impulse exists and persists, and is, in part, the basis and unuttered justification of the corset fashion.

It is true of all fashions that sooner or later they show aberrations. By the various whims and tendencies of the mind, they acquire extremes and excesses. And these often grow out of the human impulse to imitate or exceed someone else, or out of the misfortune of those who are physically unable to follow the ideal of the fashion.

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The corset is a means of hiding the proportions of a fleshy woman. But her corset is large, its size is still relatively great; therefore, large size becomes a positive misfortune; there is a rising gratification in every inch of reduction in the circumference. The smaller corset, as compared to the greater one, indicates a nearer approach to the ideal form. Smallness therefore becomes desirable by comparison. The woman who can wear a corset of the average size is proud when she compares herself with her larger neighbor. The latter, from her standpoint, laments, while the slim woman gently glories over both of them. Thus with many people comeliness ceases to be, and size becomes the only standard of comparison; and so a woman is not merely proud to have a corset smaller than her neighbor's, but she is proud to have one considerably smaller than the average diameter of woman's waist. It flatters us just a little to be able to do a thing that others cannot accomplish; and, to get into a corset six inches in diameter, is an accomplishment that few women have.

Among women it is interesting to see how the size of their waists is kept in mind and memory by each other, and what an event it

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is when one grows larger or smaller. They remember these, as tall men keep account of their height, and boys of their feats of dexterity. A woman will sometimes remember to her eightieth year the size of her own and others' waists during the third decade of their lives; and the records of changes as they pass the mid-point in life, are something both pathetic and amusing. Once, while I read a book in a moving railway train, there was a hum of conversation among three women sitting opposite me. I was suddenly startled to hear one of them say with dramatic manner and intense voice: "What do you think!" The others waited, with wide-eyed expectancy, to hear the fulmination that was to come. And this is what it was: "Could you believe it, that Mary Wonder's waist measures twenty-four inches?" The dual exclamation of surprise from the listeners clearly told that they could not; and the satisfaction on the face of the one who had spoken, showed the egoistic joy that comes of having uttered a momentous thing. She looked as happy and self-sufficient as if she had created the thing she told of.

We see the same out-cropping of human nature in other directions; for example, as

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to the size of shoes and of gloves, and the cut of other garments. Nobody could for a moment defend a very small foot as a thing of beauty on a medium-sized person. The narrow-shouldered people by padding give themselves more nearly the appearance of the average, and so there grows up a fashion of broad shoulders, and the seeming of them, which is by and by carried to such extremes that finally, having developed enormous excrescences, the fashion falls by the weight of disgust which it creates in the public mind.

I once knew a good woman who had a very long, slim hand. She could not buy gloves to fit her; if they were correct in length they were slack about the fingers, but very comfortable; if they fitted firmly about the fingers they were too short to reach to the wrist. Did she wear the comfortable ones? She wore the uncomfortable ones, that were beautiful about the fingers and made them look small and neat, notwithstanding a most awkward fit about the wrists where they could be more easily hidden. And I had a friend who, as boy and man, suffered from cold feet and chilblain for more than thirty winters—and who had always sought for means to keep his feet warm—before he

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could evolve to the point of wearing loose shoes and large overshoes. He had often tried on such at the shoe stores, but each time, as he looked down at the large size of his clothed feet, his courage failed him, and he bought the close-fitting things that tickled his vanity or saved his humiliation, but tortured his feet. In this manner he chose physical rather than mental humiliation for a third of a century, before he learned a better lesson. Lately, the foot-ball fashion or some other motive has led the true American boy to be rather proud of his large shoes, showing another swing of the pendulum.

The woman's form becomes so used to the pressure of the corset that the wearer acquires a new definition of tightness and pressure. She will declare that her corset is not tight, when to a man or a child it would be, and neither the man nor the child would willingly wear clothing about the waist that would squeeze so much. And she is perfectly candid and consciously truthful in her declarations. Once a beautiful young woman was getting a trifle stout, and her doctor quizzed her as to whether her corset was not too tight. She declared that she never wore it tight; that it was always loose



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and gave her abundance of room, and, to prove this, she said that when she took her corset off and put her gown on without it, she could easily bring the gown together within two inches! It did not occur to her that she had said anything funny until the doctor burst into laughter. Thus the individual standpoint comes to create for us new meanings for words that are used to express the common sense and common sensations of mankind. Hence the manifold and variant meanings of words as shown by the dictionary. Words have a history, and this illuminates the history of the social and personal life of the human race, and shows its steady evolution.

Not every woman would have gone to the extreme of this young person, but corset wearers as a whole, have acquired a definition of their own to express the snugness of the clothing about the trunk of the body. They are not uncandid about it, as a rule, and do not mean to be inaccurate, and do not know that they are—if they are. Who shall say that a definition of one-half the race shall be discredited or degraded by that of the other half? Lexicographers and grammarians may pretend that definitions are thus and so, and must be so maintained,

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but they cannot maintain them; and they are forced to record changes as the people vary in their usages. And the growth and evolution of the language come largely from the impulsive and hap-hazard inventions of the common people.

There is still another reason for the habit of tight lacing, which has great philosophic interest. It probably applies to only a few women. To the exceptional woman it is not for grace nor out of regard to the morbid extreme of fashion blindly followed that she tugs at her laces. It is rather to the end that some particular woman or the impersonal woman shall not have the chance of saying that her waist has grown larger, or is not smaller, than that of some other woman, or than some standard of comparison. In the aggregate many women are victims, and long-suffering ones, of the foolish ideal betrayed by the hackneyed phrase that begins with: "She shall never have it to say." These expressions have a familiar ring: "She shall never have it to say that I asked favors of her," or, "that I complained of my lot," or "that my house was untidy," or "that my complexion was worse than hers," or "that my children were dirty"—and so on, interminably. Women live and

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die, and die early and in sorrow, worn out by loyalty to this sort of a standard. It is a common standard, and concerns itself more with the non-essential, even trivial things of life, than with the larger virtues of character. Its application to the question of the size of woman's waist is only one of its hundreds of uses. It is often founded in pique or ambition, in envy or jealousy; it has existed for ages and probably will continue through our present phase of civilization.

Similarly interesting is the experience of the masculine Sophomore, or of the common dude, with his tall collar in vogue in this beginning of a new century. Ask him why he wears the ugly, uncomfortable thing, and, to avoid a confession of his enslavement, he will tell you a little tale (which in his heart he knows to be a mass of fibs) about his uncomely neck and the necessity of hiding it, and of the ease with which he wears the collar. Since boys began to explain how they had to go a-fishing and couldn't help it, or were positively prevented from getting home early, there has not been a more amusing variety of prevarication. It is well that other persons do not say such uncomplimentary things of the

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boy's neck. If they did, he would discover at once what manly curves and graceful dimensions it has; for the negligee attire of an outing makes him stand before the glass in expansive delight to see his form reflected back to him, and the neck is no small part of its admitted beauty.

Nobody can look at these aspects of life in all their bearings without being convinced that, for foolishness in the small things, as well as the large ones, neither sex of our august family can boast a monopoly, or even claim any special superiority over the other.

One of the most interesting phases of this question of psychology is shown by the various estimates we have of how other people regard us, and the way we balance our own estimates against theirs. The doctrine that we cannot see ourselves as others do, is very old and altogether true. But there are degrees of this disability; sometimes it is only partial, and we occasionally succeed in stealing round quietly to a spot near the point of vision of some other people. Women, as a class, understand fairly well how they regard each other's relation to the corset. And a girl with an extremely waspish waist is, I believe,

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always regarded by most women with a feeling of pity. But the sense of triumph which the girl herself feels in her achievement over others of her sex, may wholly smother her consciousness of what other women think of her. And this is not surprising. In a hundred ways we see the egoistic feeling, the sense of self-importance and conceit, covering up every other emotion, and ignoring the feelings and interests of others. The small boy with his toy gun or his first trousers; the same boy, older, with his first cigarette, and later with some grown man's triumph, are only stages in the same life, and show the truth equally.

I am told by many sensible women that it is a common belief of the sex that small waists are pleasing to men. And I have had a man's curiosity to know how general this belief is, for it seems to me next to impossible that the contrary sentiment, which is practically universal among men of all ages and shades of thought, should be misunderstood by women. In forty years of attentive observation of the talk of all sorts of normal boys and men, I have never known the diminutive size of a woman's waist to be complimented by one of them. On the contrary, most uncomplimentary remarks are

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often made by them about the pinched midribs of womankind.

We are apt to forget that the feminine estimate of women is quite different from the masculine, and vice versa. The question of the hour-glass corset illustrates it. Men never cease to wonder how women can possibly admire a certain man; and women query as much or more in a reverse direction.

The differing points of view of the two sexes is shown in nothing better than the diverse ways men and women regard the dressing of themselves for fun in the clothes of the other. To women it is a great event, to be amused and laughed at with the greatest glee—often to the wonder of men. To men it is very little of an event, rather a passing curiosity, and is never treasured afterward as anything striking. Even when they, as college students, get up a comic opera, and take all the women's parts, their interest in this phase of the performance, beyond a desire for success, is largely in the pleasure it gives their feminine friends, and the comradery with them incident to the preparations. Would any set of normal men present such a play to an exclusive audience of men? But women do the re-

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verse of this, and enjoy it. What is the basis of the difference? Is it to some degree the greater social restraints to adventure that surround woman, or is it innate?

The mental pictures that are projected in the minds of women and men on the suggestion of the affairs of a formal wedding, are as different as possible; and they cannot all be due to the difference of meaning the wedding has for the two sexes. For men, the prospect of the finery, the flowers, the powder, and the dressing of the bride and the bridesmaids, is a matter to be endured for the sake of the other sex, but always a trifle fatiguing. To women these things are food and drink, and the wedding procession is a blazing joy. They are not dampened by the slow and solemn tread of the bride with her guards, each foot lifted carefully, slowly projected forward, held in the air for a moment, then put down with a motion that no effort can quite free from the quality of a jerk; the head thrown back the while, and the face directed forward, with cheeks blanched and shrunken, and the whole aspect as though she had just come out of a prison where she had been starved for a week, and were marching to her execution. To men, this sometimes has the sug-

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gestion of tragedy; but many women will seek the best seats to see, even at the expense of courtesy, and crane their necks to get a vision of the whole spectacle that shall be complete, and will miss nothing, and remember long afterward the minutest details of it all.

One effect of wearing good clothes, or clothes that one likes, is to create a sense of comfort and self-respect; which sensations may be good if they are not mixed with a feeling of pride and bumptiousness that is illaudable. This fact is emphasized by the converse experience of us all in the distracting uneasiness with which we bear the feeling that our clothes misfit us, or are untidy or not appropriate to the occasion. We cannot think or talk connectedly. The greatest eloquence and the divinest music alike fail to fix our attention, or wrest it from the chagrin about the clothes that cover us. Even a lovely face and gentle words sometimes fail.

Years ago I had a friend who more than once roused himself from the melancholy of chronic invalidism by getting up from his bed, putting on his best suit of clothes, and going out for a walk. He said he always felt a sense of uplifting from it that he could



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never have in his common clothes. And I know good men, who, after a day of taxing business cares, go home and put on evening dress before their dinner, and declare they feel rested in consequence. The habit of wearing better clothes on Sunday furnishes a distinct portion of the benefits of the one day of rest. It is a civilizing influence of no mean sort. And its force is wholly psychologic; it helps mentally to a higher standard. Better clothes seem to go with better demeanor, and so men behave better in them, and think of higher things, as one always, to some degree, grasps a mental mood by assuming the physical attitude that usually is linked with it. To force themselves to behave decently helps most people, if only a little, to be decent.

Does not the corset help women, mentally, to the same end? I am sure I have heard many a woman apologize for the untidiness of her clothes, and say she was not dressed, when she looked perfection in this respect, and my intuitions prompted the suspicion that her only trouble was the lack of a corset. The touch of this magic contrivance gives her a feeling of being dressed and proper, that relieves her of embarrassment. To be sure, sometimes it leads women to

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rely on its lulling influence too much, and to forget that they may have an untidy gown or person. But I doubt that it ever makes one more untidy than she would be without it; and I should like to believe that it does, by its subtle influence upon the mind and life, make every woman who wears it a little better, as well as a little happier, than she otherwise could be.

It is unnatural to believe that the influence of this garment is lowering upon the soul of the wearer, when its very object is largely the realization of an ideal of beauty whose normal issue is an elevation in spirit and intention, and therefore better conduct.

# The Physical Basis of Expertness



## Physical Basis of Expertness

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Expertness is the ability to do difficult things with unusual deftness and skill; or it is unusual knowledge of some difficult subject. Then we call it learning. It is an acquired power but people attain it in varying degrees and with different rates of progress. It is a power that is never manifestly inborn; no expertness is discoverable in the human subject at birth, except in crying, and in the simplest acts necessary to take and swallow food. Man must learn by slow degrees to be adept and skilful and wise, if he ever attains to such superiority. In the lower animals we see the same quality to a surprising degree, only it is nearly all inborn, not acquired in the lifetime of the animal. Indeed, it is often questioned that animals ever learn of themselves to do any of the usual acts and functions that are necessary for their existence. The bird is never taught to build a nest, nor the bee to

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gather the materials for honey or to make honey-comb, nor the beaver to make a dam; but these products of remarkable skill are made without a previous model and wholly without instruction. Moreover, they are made the first time by each animal with a perfection that is apparently never improved upon. It is difficult to discover that any subsequent work of this sort ever shows the slightest improvement over the first, although scientific investigation and measurements have, I believe, shown that an increase of skill does come in some cases of repeated attempts of the animal in its peculiar tasks. The bird's third nest may therefore be a trifle better than its first.

This expertness in animals is called instinct, but, as an expression of animal function, it is without question the same thing in essence as the skill that man acquires through patient effort and repeated trials.

There is a strong economic reason why the young of the lower animals should be born with a ready-made skill to do the things necessary for their own protection and perpetuation; and they never have instinctive skill outside of this narrow field; there is no need of it. The child of man, on the other

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hand, is born under the safeguarding of the intellectual prevision and support of the race, and has no such necessity; so, beyond the simple instincts to cry, and to suckle and swallow, its expertness must all be gained by effort, by observation, mimetism and instruction. The effort that is necessary to acquire expertness varies for the different maneuvers and fields of knowledge and varies with the individuals of the race; some learn in one direction easily, others in another; some never learn anything easily. The general capacity to acquire knowledge and skill varies among people as much as they differ in their physical appearance and characteristics. Some learn easily to play a musical instrument with marvelous skill; others master by slow degrees, and never to perfection, the simplest necessary acts of their daily lives. But what expertness soever comes to an individual is a gift never foreshadowed by powers that he has at birth. That is a moment of life when human beings are alike in their utter helplessness and ignorance.

But, after all, the skill of the birds and the beavers must have been acquired. Each of their generations has added but a trifle to it, and manifold thousands of generations

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must have been required to bring each order of animals up to its present degree of expertness. It was in the inevitable course of nature that it should have been so; the varieties of animals that had most skill could best resist the enemies about them and so survive; those with less capacity would go to the wall and perish. Whether from accident or creative design, animals with growing skill would not only survive, but by the forces or the accidents that helped to produce it, their skill would tend to grow and become adjusted more and more nicely to their needs.

The wonder of the growth in expertness among animals is that each generation of them should be able to keep and hold a large part of the trifle that it could attain by itself, and to transmit this to its offspring as an instinct; so that to-day we see many species with skill that is not only marvelous in its qualities, but apparently perfection. Man appears to have no such power of storing up and transmitting skill in this manner. His child is born devoid of it and must learn it all anew. We shall see presently that something in a distant way akin to this storing up of accumulated power and expertness from generation to generation,



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belongs to the human race, although the fact is not at first apparent.

In the growth of the acquired expertness of man, one and the same progressive sequence of steps must occur with each individual; and it is a course of repeated trials, and efforts more or less patient. The simple and most necessary acts come first, like standing and walking, and the use of the hands from curiosity, and for the physical needs from moment to moment. Then a larger range of movements is learned; those that are involved and interdependent, like speech and handicraft, in which something like skill begins to be revealed. Finally, the race is differentiated by the appearance of varying kinds and degrees of skill among different individuals, and so there results all the endless variations in capacity and power. In the acquisition of ideas and notions similar steps succeed each other as in the learning of manual dexterity.

The conclusion is unavoidable, the moment the subject of expertness in man is considered carefully, that at first it is all mental, and that afterward a part of it becomes manual. There is no such thing as education of the hands and feet and tongue alone; rather the brain learns how to control

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the evolutions of the body through the nervous machinery ; then the muscle skill comes and the purely intellectual expertness as well, and the one helps the other.

The first step in the building up of deftness is a conscious or unconscious voluntary act. The child puts one foot before the other in his first effort at walking, in a movement directed by his will and with the exercise of all the judgment that he possesses. Delighted at his first step he finds the next one easier, although he is obliged to direct every step by his will power. But in a little while, he is walking without a thought of it, and is not consciously using his will; mentally, he hardly knows he is walking; and his mind is now given to some thought or evolution or other volitional act—perhaps with his hands, possibly in the use of some tool or utensil, or in trying to frame words or sing or whistle, in imitation of somebody whom he likes to imitate. Presently he reaches a point where he can do all these new things without fixing his attention specially on each step of them in detail; if his mental attention is given to them it is for the purpose of greater expertness, and not for the due sequence of the steps in the evolutions.

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This new thing that has happened, we call learning. The child has learned to walk; to use its spoon and knife and fork; to whittle, throw a ball, and to bat; then to write his language, to play the piano and do hundreds of other things as easily; and to have many fixed ideas and opinions. The thing that has occurred in his experience is this: the brain first directed each act through the spinal cord and other nerve centers and cells connected with the brain, and the nerves that control the muscles. Each repetition made it easier, and required less brain power and mental attention; each one found the centers and cells below the brain acting more independently of the brain, or, to put it differently, acting in the same way as before, but with less and less supervision from above—till, finally, they executed the several evolutions on the slightest hint from the brain, so slight sometimes that the brain was unaware, and could not remember that the hint had been given. When this point was reached the movements were largely mechanical or automatic; the lower centers in this mechanical sort of a way had come to relieve the mind of the necessity of giving detailed attention to these acts. The brain was, therefore, left free to give its best

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power of attention and concentration to other things.

The automatisms thus acquired endure for long, change little, and are the habits that characterize each individual—that make each differ a little from every other human being. They are the essential quality wherewith all expertness of every kind and degree is made. In the mechanism of these automatisms the movements recur again and again in the same order; each one is suggested to the spinal or other nerve centers by the one that preceded it, and it in turn suggests the one to follow, and so on and on interminably. A most complicated set of involved movements, like a piano tune or a song, is thus started by the mind, and then seems to go on repeating itself in due order, with the mind dreaming or thinking of other things, and almost or quite unconscious—in moments wholly so—of what the hands or the voice are doing. When you repeat the alphabet it is not the starting of the jingle that determines that *l* shall follow *k*, but it is the uttering of *k* and the letters immediately preceding it that forces *l* to be spoken after it. And it is just as impossible that any other letter should take its place, as it is certain that this one shall be spoken.

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The mechanism consists of a chain of successive suggestions that must occur in one specific order and cannot happen in any other; they are interdependent, each link gets inspiration from its predecessor, and puts its successor in motion.

Another interesting fact, too often forgotten, is that we finally come in a hundred ways to depend on the automatism, the mind's creation, to put the mind right and to refresh the memory. Thus we invoke the multiplication table to help out our reasoning and save it labor. This table, so to say, speaks itself and needs neither memory nor reasoning; and it helps. Often we cannot tell the exact relation of a particular letter of the alphabet to other letters, till we have started the automatism and let it run on, down to the doubtful point, to enlighten us. So it is with many rhymes that we learn for the purpose of relieving the memory and mental attention. How many men in a hundred who speak *our* English tongue can tell the number of days in each of the months picked out at random, without repeating the rhyme that begins with: "Thirty days hath September, April, June, and November"?

Repetition makes automatism in thought

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and action; automatisms are habits; and these are indispensable necessities for the relief of mental attention, and for the conservation of the powers of the brain for the needs of our physical existence. They are the scaffolding erected by the brain, and on which it builds and rises to larger achievements. Without such aids the brain would be ruined in attempting to do the feats that it now accomplishes easily and without harm.

Education consists in a congeries of useful automatisms of brain and body. That person is best educated who has the largest number of correct and efficient ones, and this, at bottom, is all there is of education. Pick it to pieces; analyze it, dissect it, and this is practically what and all you will find it to consist in. Automatism shows in mental acts, and even notions and opinions, as truly as in muscular movements; appearing thus, it is learning or education, pure and simple. This may seem at first to be impossible; opinions and thought appear so radically different from bodily movements. And they are different, yet a little reflection will show that they all fall into the same category of automatic activities, and are in ultimate analysis alike in making expert-

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ness, and, if well ordered, in being expertness. The phenomenal violinist is not a whit more automatic than the judge on the bench who decides instanter a lot of intricate and momentous questions apparently in the most off-hand manner, but correctly; or the captain of the ship, who, from the bridge, decides equally delicate and important questions of navigation in the same rapid manner. In each case the mental attention and judgment help, but it is the automatism of the nerve centers, which has been built up by countless repetitions in similar ways, that is the main reliance. Something occurs in court that violates judicial sense and usage, and the judge is instantaneously arrayed against it, and rules accordingly. He does this without taking the trouble to reason about it—the performance is purely automatic. The ship's captain sees an unexpected danger ahead, and a correct remedy comes to him as by instinct. Long before he has time to reason about it, he shouts his orders or makes his signals; then he deliberates as to whether his instinctive act was correct, and does it without knowing that he is doing it. The violinist well illustrates both the mental and muscular automatisms. His bow and fingers in their

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movements, and the cerebral association by which one segment of the series of motions suggests another that follows, show the manual mechanism in a wonderful way. But in the rush of action and sound he presses his finger on a string a twentieth of an inch from its proper place for the right tone, and the slightest discord strikes his ear. Does he stop to reason about the error? Rather, his finger end finds its true place instantly and automatically, and the only other mental act that occurs in connection with it may be a sense of chagrin afterward that it has happened.

Not merely ideas and opinions become automatic, but moral principles and the general quality of conscience as well. And if conscience, then, within limits, conduct also. Severe as it may seem, this is a logical conclusion from the premises, and involves no violation of good reasoning; in fact, there is no stopping-place short of it after we once admit these elementary truths in mental action; and the truths are as axiomatic as any fact in human physiology. But the conclusion is *not* severe, it only seems so, and it does not impeach either conscience or conduct. It helps to explain these in a rational way for our better



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philosophy and comfort. Man makes use of these automatisms through his will or volition; his efficiency and power among men depend upon the number and usefulness of them; they are his expertness. He uses his expertness to contribute to his needs and further his purposes of various kinds; if his expertness is of a high order, and varied, he has, *ipso facto*, a great collection of the working tools of life. He may neglect to use them or use them unwisely, even foolishly, but he has them, and he has also the responsibility of having them, which he cannot shift, even if he would. He must answer, somewhere and somehow, for this responsibility.

Not only do automatisms of the lower spinal centers give the brain (or mind) freedom from details and thus increased power for larger things and thinking; but they are a refuge for the brain when, later in life, it begins to flag from certain blood-vessel changes that are incident to age. The brain flags usually because its cortex receives a progressively reduced amount of blood, a commodity that is indispensable to alertness and initiative. It is then that the brain reaches a stage where there is a growing disposition to be content with things as

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they are; and a few hints and suggestions to the lower nerve centers set up the necessary automatic actions and keep them going, so that there may be the seeming of a normal condition, of fresh energy and the usual cerebral activity. This conservative arrangement is the more fortunate since the blood-vessels of the brain are more prone than those of the spinal cord to degenerations that lessen the supply of blood to the cells of the part. Perhaps it is a penalty that we have to pay for the intense activity of the brain in early life, that it is the organ which first becomes obnoxious to degenerative changes that impair its efficiency.

Let us now go a step farther and see, if we can, what happens in the brain in the growth of automatisms; see what occurs when we learn.

And first we encounter what appears to be a law in the action of brain cells (the minute bodies that are the functioning part of the organ), which may be stated substantially as follows: that, primarily, brain cells tend to repeat a particular act, rather than do another and different one. A first single evolution makes the repetition of it easier than a new one; so each repetition of a given act fixes more firmly the tendency of

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the brain in that direction, and renders it less likely that it will fail to be repeated when there is any stimulus toward an evolution of that general character. The tendency once firmly established and we have a habit in cerebral function that requires force to disturb or change. Hence brain habits are produced most easily where none have been formed before, and this, of course, means the unploughed field of childhood, of the brain of youth, a fact that is verified by all the experience of the world. But to say there is a law of action of cells is only one step toward a perfect explanation. Why do the cells act in this rather than in some other way? Their health and vigor would naturally seem to be best conserved by a variation in action; sameness of action in numerous directions means monotony, and why not as a consequence less vigor? It is logical to assume that there must be something in the construction and arrangement of brain cells to account for their laws of function—rather, it is fair to suppose the brain cells would, in their development, come to be so arranged and nourished, and acquire such powers as would enable them to perform their best functions in the economy. The anatomists

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have in late years conceived the relations of brain cells in several successive ways. One of them helps us to explain in a most fascinating manner their peculiar action. The cells are, many of them at least, apparently separated by a minute space from their neighbors—perhaps all are so arranged. If this is true the cell impulses must extend in a nuncial manner by indirect continuity from one to another; must plough their way perhaps through an intercellular substance, to make paths for themselves in some fashion that we can probably never quite understand. If anything even approaching this arrangement really exists, it is not hard to see how paths of communication would be made and so habits of action formed. The way once blazed through a wilderness is easier to find than a new one, and a well-trodden path is always enticing; a water channel once made in the direction of least resistance entices the water again to flow there by all the laws that govern it. Or, if our fancy makes the brain cells immovable and separated from each other like scattered soldiers forbidden to stir, who can only send messages from one part of a field to another by shouting them, man to man, we shall see how natu-

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rally the carried word would seek a route that had been traversed before. Into a chain of signal stations, accustomed to each other's signals, new stations would not easily be taken nor the signals be sent through a new channel, as long as the old one served.

While the histology of the future may disturb the obvious physical basis for such a scheme as the one here suggested, some such theory is likely to stand for a working basis in our study of mental automatisms.

Of the automatisms there can be no question, nor of the influences that produce them. Some people automatize slowly, others, rapidly; some require few, others many, repetitions of thought and movement to accomplish a fixation of either; and all automatize in certain directions easier than in others. Such differences are due to personal variation and do not discredit but rather prove the theory on which all expertness must be explained.

Changing an automatism or displacing one by another may cost more in effort than the original one did. Habits are hard to break; the older and more fixed they are, the greater the difficulty. And the difficulty grows, too, with the radicalness of the

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change attempted; to introduce a wholly novel automatism that runs counter to those already long in existence is always hard; but one acquisition may help another when along lines that are not dissimilar. Changing one pen-stroke in writing may be distinctly helped by the habits already formed as to all the combinations of pen movements, when to change the character of all of one's handwriting might be extremely difficult. By attempting only one change at a time and a slight one, the mental attention is concentrated upon that and cognate habits may assist in producing it. So correct habits may help the formation of other and desirable ones that are more or less related. But, of course, the most economical method is to start right, and build up the education of the mind in such a logical way as to involve the necessity of the fewest changes possible. To have to unlearn is always a waste of energy, however it may increase a sense of moderation as well as of wisdom. And educators have not been the least among the sinners in their treatment of the young, for they have been too prone to violate all proportion and cause children to form useless habits, as well as useful ones in an illogical manner.

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Yet it is impossible to have the mental automatisms of a child created in such sequence as to have nothing to unlearn, especially as to minor elements. The child misconceives the meanings of most words at first, and therefore must unlearn a good deal. Novel words have for him too wide or too narrow a meaning, and he must correct his first impressions and usages as time goes on and his experience widens. The same statement holds as to physical movements; many errors in manual habits require correction as expertness grows. So all through life there is changing, lopping off here and making additions there, in building our automatic character of expertness of mind and body in every sort. It is more or less of a constant metamorphosis, but each automatism may help or be the basis of, or the fulcrum for, further changes of a slight degree. It is where the demand is for wholly new ones, such as run squarely counter to every phase of a completed automatism, that the strain is severe and the loss of energy and time probably greatest. Here it is not a metamorphosis but a revolution in habits that is required; yet, it is accomplished, in a way, if there is enough patience. But it is not brought about by the complete

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destruction of all the vestiges of the old automatisms; new ones may be created that will control for many years, but the old ones are only laid aside, the paths are unused, grown up with the weeds of neglect and perhaps not trodden for decades, but the searching brain can, any day, easily find them out. Take a sexagenarian who learned farm work when he was a boy, and who has not done a stroke of it for forty years. Let him some day grasp the plow handles and throw the reins over his neck, and see what a perfect furrow he can turn! Or, take him to the woods with an axe and see how adept he is as a wood-chopper, after a generation's neglect of the exercise. The plowing and wood-chopping were useful kinds of skill, filled a creditable part of the man's career and were stepping-stones to better things in a life of honor. But there are habits formed early in life that are neither useful in themselves nor helpful toward better ones for later usefulness, and their creation is at best a waste of energy—always to be deplored.

I have hinted at the possible loss in vigor of brain cells by reason of the restriction in function due to automatic action. The idea gains some support from the normal avidity



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for recreation shown by the more wholesome people. And recreation and play consist in activities that are radically different from those most employed in our daily work-lives. Denizens of the city go to the woods, play golf, fish and hunt; and get away as far as possible from all the cares and emotions of the artificial and intense life of the town. People from the country, the frontier and the sea, seek the cities for novelty and change. In each case the change brings rest to the functions and forces that have borne the work and the duty; and exercises those that have been idle, and so the general vigor is maintained.

And the power of the automatisms is not lost, nor is their force abated, for after the recreation is over, the rested cells, inured to the automatic action, take up their work with more vigor and certainty than before.

Tired out cells lose their reliability of action even in the most automatic directions, and become fitful and uncertain. This uncertainty of action is a sure sign of the need of rest and recreation, which are the basis, next to food, of the most remarkable restorations of power. Our daily sleep does this service for us to a slight degree, but we often work beyond the power of sleep to

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keep the cells up to par, and must seek other and wider influences for restoration.

Man's place in nature is determined largely by the character of his expertness, and the way it is acquired. If it were all of the instinctive variety, his capacities would be few and narrow; he would have little power to adjust himself to new conditions and difficulties. In the midst of a struggle for existence he would have little advantage over the rest of the animal kingdom. If a hundred generations were required to teach man a new art, as is necessary for the animals, he would go to the wall in the general contest. But in one generation he may learn a hundred new arts that have never, in all the existence of his race, been thought of before, and so be able to conquer the world. The little addition to its manual power, which the animal caught in a single generation, was for its obvious and immediate needs; while man reasons for another place and another day, and does things that have no obvious meaning for his immediate needs, but are potent for ulterior power. And it is the ulterior power that conquers—that guards against accidents, and provides resources.

But man has instinctive tendencies, if not

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instinct, although he seems not to have either. These tendencies crop out when it is found that a developing child learns easier than the average those acts that his ancestors were adepts at. This is something, if not much, and is the basis of the peculiar powers of the so-called genius. The learning is sometimes so easy that it looks as if the child had the knowledge untaught. But this is not true; all the powers and expertness of man must be acquired from nothing, through his long youth and pupilage of at least a fifth of a century. And the time is not wasted. It is filled with opportunities for development and change, for new adaptations to the purposes of his existence.

Nor does the character of expertness, and the somewhat mechanical explanation of it, detract from the dignity of body and soul. In the first place, it is not beneath us to explain the mechanism, if we can, of any even abstruse function or power that we possess. It could not detract from the glory of the human soul for us to dissect it if we could, and know its uttermost quality. There will forever be mystery enough in the mind and body of man, in spite of all our study and discoveries.

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To know the real quality of man's expertness adds perceptibly to his dignity and importance. For it shows that he is very distinctly not a creature of a fixed rule, except such a rule as he in part creates; nor an automaton fated to live a fixed and predetermined life. Rather it reveals him as possessing the greatest prerogative that can belong to a conscious being—the ability to measure, in some degree, the automatisms he builds up for himself, and, within certain limits, the power to direct and control them, and so, in some measure, to be the arbiter of his own career—the creator of his own character.

# The Discordant Children



## The Discordant Children

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Much of the world's philosophy of human life is very old. It must be true, or it would not have found acceptance so long. It has been uttered by meditative minds through the centuries, and always along the same general lines. Each student has threshed it over, and evolved an expression of it a little different from that of the rest, and perhaps somewhat original, but the essential principles are the same. Plato and Aristotle said it before the days of the Christ; and since then Marcus Aurelius and Goethe and Emerson, and many others, have told variously a similar story—each probably telling it better than any other for the particular time and for the people who were listening. And there have been unnumbered silent souls who have thought it all out for themselves and by themselves and alone.

This philosophy has guided society in its evolution and development; it has made society, and has itself been made by the needs of society; and its work has been good.

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It has always been rich in its recognition of the meaning of childhood. Children are the men and women of to-morrow, and the hope of all time. Their proper care is the most potent influence of society upon itself and the human race.

Pre-eminently, the philosophy common to the world applies to the obvious needs, wants and defects of mankind for the particular day and generation. The hidden, the recondite, have been left for the modern student of sociology and political economy to find out, and the discovery always comes through laborious effort. We easily grasp the palpable; maybe the hidden is more vital, but that we are apt to slur over and neglect.

The axioms of the centuries have the same ring in any language: In the long run virtue and honesty pay best. The largest sum total of happiness in the life of a soul is the goal of its duty. Cultivate the industrial faculties of a boy, and it will make a hardy and forceful man of him. Truth is mighty, and consists with the universe.—These and similar doctrines are very old and altogether true; and they are as wholesome for all men as the morning sunshine. They are the self-evident heritage of all time, and have ceased to be remarkable.



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But the old philosophers could not know that a micro-organism breeding in the human blood could weaken the body, and so decimate a race and force it to the background in its struggle for national life; or that insanity is not the possession of a devil, but a manifestation of disease of the brain that is to some degree preventable and curable; or that a better selection of food and better ventilation and sewerage could lessen the death rate, and make a race, starting in poverty and nothingness, to rise and dominate the earth.

We understand and try to provide for the every-day manifest needs of the average children, and of men and women. Society has devised or evolved rather elaborate rules for many of these requirements. So of the very evident defects—and the rules for both classes work fairly well. We turn easily to the study of the insane, the criminal classes, the imbeciles, and the otherwise defective. This later day has witnessed great changes and improvement along these lines, in the humanities, and for the rescue and protection of the weak.

In the general education of the masses the gain has been enormous. Better methods have obtained, and so better results, and

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more power and effectiveness in the work of life. Education has become more easy and interesting, more broad and practical. The great body of normal mankind in enlightened countries is to-day probably better off in these particulars, as well as in general, than ever before.

But there is a large class of people in moral and mental twilight who do not belong to the normal members of the race, to be governed by the various rules which we devise, and who are not so apparently of the defective classes as to make it easy for us to deal with them as such. They are not insane or imbecile; nor are many of them true degenerates; but they are not normal as measured by the figures of average people, and the rules for such cannot fairly be applied to them. They are wayward, erratic and unmanageable; they are irascible and discordant. Yet, because they are not clearly of the defective classes we mostly insist on forcing them, theoretically at least, into the category of the strictly normal to which all the rules for the majority are applicable. We are slow to discover and seem reluctant to believe that there is a discordant class.

It is one of our fads to believe that people

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should be able to fit into the usual grooves; that they are sufficiently alike to be amenable to the same moral and mental statutes. And we fly to the conclusion that those who do not readily fit the rules we make for the race, can be made to fit them. Like Procrustes of old, we would cut off the metaphoric legs of those who are too long, and stretch out those who are too short to fit the special bed we have devised for them all alike. In some sense and with somebody we attempt this maneuver every day of our lives.

We say a child needs such and such influences; and should be treated thus and so. That is to say, the average child; but the exceptions are legion. The usual calculation of what is necessary is easy, but it ignores all the cases that vary from the common type; and good sense, as well as common fairness, requires that we should deal with children on the basis of what they are, rather than what we may calculate they ought to be.

Most children of moderate minds do fit the ordinances of society. They can follow the program made for the majority and can do it easily, or without much friction, and not collapse in doing it. They are adjusted

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by nature to the routine which society has mapped out as best for the family of man as a whole. The routine is made for the majority; and so is adjusted to their needs. And the majority are like docile domestic animals; they do not try to get out of the traces or away from the reins and the halters provided for them.

But some do not and cannot fit the conditions fixed for the majority. They do not fall into the grooves of the average child, and they cannot be forced into them successfully. They are misfits, rebellious and out of sympathy with their environment. They make up the mass of the truant children in the community, those whose parents cannot keep them continuously located. They often have a deeply grounded dislike for their parents and can barely tolerate them. They are off to the street and into manifold kinds of mischief. Most of them fib; some of them steal; they often approach the border line of crime; sometimes they step over it and are arrested. Their friends bail them out and hush up their peccadillos; they get into trouble again and run afoul of the law, and are repeatedly taken into custody—some are sent to the reform school, and later, some to the penitentiary. Many

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of the milder examples run away from home, travel, roam about for months or years; the worst ones do the unnatural crimes, even murder, that are the wonder of society and despair of the economists.

These are the discordant children whose music is inharmony and stridor. They represent every shade and variation of abnormality within the range of the definition, from a moderate degree of divergence to the extremes of degeneracy. But as a working basis for the study of them, they may be divided into three classes.

The first class is the smallest one, and the worst in degree of perversion. It is composed of those who have congenital qualities that make it impossible for them to live and work harmoniously with their wholesome fellows, or with the social conditions about them. They are in constant rebellion against these conditions and against the rules of society which the majority find no objection to. Some of them are degenerates; they have irregularly shaped heads and bodies, and warped mental estimates. They are not in harmony with anything; they often run to intense passions of many kinds, and these often lead to crime. At first pleased with a set of novel conditions,

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they soon tire of them and begin to rebel; and they do this in any wholesome environment, and they are substantially always in trouble.

A second class is made up of such as apparently have the same sort of warping of nature as the first; who rebel as vigorously at times, but who in certain conditions and surroundings—certain associations—are as placid and harmonious as the most normal. They are the balky horses of human life; they kick and hold back and refuse to work or play at certain times and under particular circumstances, and all the whipping and abuse possible cannot change them. They pull well and are good tempered at other times. We are always at a loss for the explanation for all this—but the horses know a part of the reason, only they cannot speak and say. So the children know in part, but they cannot tell correctly, even if they would. They are often irritated by their own families; rather, they are abnormally irritable to their own, but they get on well with strangers. If carried too far their irascibility with their own people becomes a form of lunacy. They are often truants; they hate school and devise all sorts of schemes to deceive and outwit those who would help and control them.

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Such children may easily be exasperated by hateful conditions into committing suicide or other crimes; yet under favorable influences they may become exemplary citizens. They do not commit misdemeanors from a sense of duty as the first class often seem to.

The first class are essentially lawless, and go wrong almost unavoidably—they are against the status quo and the government, whatever these may be. The second are rebellious only when the misfit with the environment exists. Bring about a right adjustment, and from raging furies these children become gentle and docile. And a right adjustment may usually be found; there are conditions in which every member of this class is fitted to live, and can live with pleasure and without rebellion. Each child yearns for and seeks those conditions; it does not seek or wish for a life of discord; it strives to find the lines where it can move in peace—and it tries many experiments and makes frequent blunders in the search, but keeps on trying.

These two classes of children naturally blend more or less into each other. The second class is vastly the larger of the two; the marked degenerates and those who are always in rebellion are a small minority of

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the whole. But the two classes have one characteristic in common: their discordant traits are, within limits, constant through life; these may be changed somewhat by care and training (and those of the second class change most), but they are never wholly eradicated.

There is a third and a very large class of discordant children, composed of those who manifest the defects and perversity only through a certain period, and often a rather early period, of their lives. They grow or evolve out of their friction and lawlessness by the march of time. Each half decade witnesses some change in their behavior toward those who are associated with them, especially in the direction of adjustment. Sometimes a radical change occurs suddenly—and becomes permanent. Their rebellion is usually greatest in the earlier years, say up to the age of fifteen, after which there is a decided change for the better. One marked characteristic of many of these—of all the classes for that matter—is their disregard for the rights, conveniences and feelings of others. This is a defect that is founded in selfishness, as are most of the discords of all the children under discussion; as well as those of most men and



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women. And selfishness does not end with the fifteenth year, nor usually through life, but it changes then, and thereafter conspires more toward gaining the good opinions of others; and this gives an altruistic shade to it that is refreshing. The rowdy of a boy, careless of himself and blind to the feelings of others, suddenly becomes a gentleman, and he does not know why or how. He does many of the things that gentlemen do, and drops his loud, loutish unkemptness and becomes fit for the fondness of others, which he grows to covet. To specify one of the psychologic differences we might say that he has become less brutally selfish, and taken on more refinement of conceit—which is only another form of selfishness. But then he is more amenable to the behests of society and more endurable to others; he is less a barbarian. He has suddenly ceased to be a problem for the publicists; he is an attractive member of society and may remain so through life. From being himself one of the unfortunates and a subject for the solicitude of others, he suddenly becomes one of those who study the unfortunates and help them.

The different classes of erratic children need different modes of treatment. They

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cannot all be helped much, some can hardly be helped at all; but most of them can be improved somewhat if they are dealt with in the right way.

Class number one offers the most serious and the most nearly hopeless problem. Their fixedness of morbid impulses, their discords with everything about them, and their proof against good influences that strongly move other children, mostly take them out of the reach of our efforts. But the fact that many of them may be changed a little, and a few greatly, should constrain us to persist with limitless patience, in a search for the influence that may help them.

Classes two and three can be helped very much and easily if the right course is pursued. There is no justification for the loss of any of them; yet our bungling and hesitation—due in part to the annoyance that most such children give their parents and friends, and the failure to understand them, make most of our efforts in their behalf rather nugatory. There is generally devoted to them a large amount of energy that by its misdirection is almost thrown away; the children grow up, worry along, experiment with themselves in a fatuous way and run amuck of the world; and end finally in

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success or failure, as they may. They nearly all (especially the third group) come out right if let alone, and if allowed to evolve with the smallest amount of interference. Too much training does them harm, and they usually receive too much.

What to do with the discordant children is the paramount question. That they cannot be dealt with like the average child is no reason for ignoring them, or throwing their claims aside as of no consequence. In dealing with them we should, as far as we are concerned, divest the problem of all fiction and foolish notions, and consider it as we would any other problem, deliberately, and as far from morbid emotion as possible. Least of all should we regard the discordant child as a disgrace to the family, to be spoken of under the breath and to be shamed for his perversity. His traits are innately no more disgraceful than it is to dislike a certain diet; and the fact that a child does not like oat-meal and cheese is no reason why he should not be nourished by other foods—these are not the only pabulum for the human body, and it is even conceivable that the child is right and that oat-meal and cheese are not the best for him or for any of us. The disgrace obtains only in a failure

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to seek the right food for body and soul. Neither should such a child be regarded as an invalid, to be coddled and indulged like a baby. These children have some of the best energy of the world, which may be extremely useful or very much of a nuisance to society, and they should early feel, if they can feel, that they have large responsibilities in their own conduct.

How to select the right course of management for each of them, varying as they do so widely and so radically, is the most perplexing of problems. We can never hope, with the fallibility of our minds, to solve it perfectly for all the cases; but if we can see the condition of a part of them ameliorated—even a small part—we ought to have abundant satisfaction. In our blundering efforts and halting purposes we shall often apply the wrong treatment and misuse the best possible measures, and so cause them to work wrong. But we can at least try, and there are a few cardinal facts and principles that, if we study and follow them, ought to minify our errors and make our success at least apparent.

The first great step to consider in the right management of these children is in the physical direction, or rather the medical

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direction; as the foremost fact about many of them is that their misfortunes are due to the reflex effect on the nervous system of some local physical irritation, or of some wrong stimulation. The irritations are alarmingly common, mostly curable, and alone produce many of the cases; that is, without them many of the worst ones would be perfectly normal children. The irritations often start in early childhood and continue for many years, producing an incessant, slow, sometimes exasperating sort of grinding upon the nervous tolerance, that makes the victim as far from what he otherwise would be, as a maniac is from tranquil sanity. And the saddest fact about it is that after the irritation has existed for several years the nervous equation and temper of the child are changed for life; new and bad nervous habits and vicious emotions have been formed that will not stop even after the original cause is gone. Hence the rule should be invariable to remove the irritations early, wherever and whatever they may be. They mostly are discoverable, yet, as to some of them, parents are apt to ignore their existence, or even refuse to believe in their possibility.

The physical irritations are of course not

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all of the same measure of harmfulness. Those that do not worry the nervous system do little harm, but those that worry it do injury always. The problem of the discordant children is the problem of the erratic brain and nervous system; and undue excitement of this system in childhood and youth can never fail to do it the most positive harm. The damage, produced through the months (other things being equal) is probably always in the ratio of the irritability of the nerves of the part that is involved—and in children these nerves are often the nameless ones that are the very quick of life.

For parents and caretakers of children to say they are ignorant that such irritations often exist, is to confess that they do not observe the children growing up under their very eyes, or that they are not on confidential terms with them, or have not the courage to be frank with them as to the things that most concern their feelings and affect their lives. These confessions are lamentable, and have to be made for and by the majority of parents; but none of them nor all of them can excuse one for so great an unfairness to a child. And of all the sins in the category of unmeant wickedness few

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can surpass that of a parent who bars his child from coming to him with open frankness as to the closest friend, about those unfortunate if not reprehensible things that are uppermost in his mind, because they are uppermost to his nerves. The thing most evident to the nerves is sure to be uppermost in the mind; indeed, often, close mental attention to much beside some engrossing nervous sensation is quite impossible. You charge a child again and again to remember his errands and the details of what you tell him. But your words come in at one ear and go out at the other; he is absorbed with his sensations and his distorted notions of their meaning, and he will not heed and cannot remember.

That the proprieties of life should become its pruderies, and lead us often to sins of omission to the children, is the saddest miscarriage of good purposes. When the child comes to you, or tries to, with a sliver in his finger and you say, "Hush, hush, that is not to be talked of; just look at the stars, behold the trees and the flowers," you give him precisely the comfort of a blow in the face. The waves of the sea will not be still at your bidding. And if you try to hide from your child, and yourself ignore, a

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quarter of his nature, and then permit his nerves to remind him of that quarter perpetually, you ought to expect to fail, as you will fail. It is left for the older people, who are farther removed from the spontaneity of nature, to say and believe, out of a rhapsody of putative religious fervor, that there is no sliver and no pain. The child knows better, he sees through the deception and will have none of it. On one basis only will he ignore the pain, namely, that it is admitted to exist and to be unpleasant, and that it may and must be borne, with what stoicism he can command.

After the physical irritations, next in degree of power to lower the tone of the brain and nerves, stand the various stimulations, whether by alcoholic or other poisons of the brain like tea, coffee and tobacco, or unwholesome emotions; and lack of tranquil rest and sleep. Children should live by food only and without stimulants or emotions beyond their years and be well nourished constantly. Modern society is much disposed to forget these truths, and slow to learn that in violating them a child may mortgage its future more effectually than a man can by any means in his power.

On the moral side it is quite as important



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to be candid and frank with the discordant children—as, for that matter, with all children. The self-respect of the individual ought, if possible, to be conserved. No ordinary man can do the best that is in him, or anything approaching it, if he has the sense of humiliation and of being belittled and degraded. The larger and the more self-poised the man the more he is insensible to these emotions, and a few stoical philosophers are able to ignore them entirely when deeply engrossed with some purpose. But children cannot do this, nor should we expect them to—their egoism and self-consciousness are far too great for that.

A child's sense of fairness is acute; and it is too potent and valuable a quality to be lost. Children, like men, do best when dealt with fairly, candidly, and without mystery or subterfuge. A great influence over a boy is often lost by his discovering that what he calls a trick has been practised upon him. Boys hate tricks when they are the victims, and their monitors are the authors of them. A trick may be taken in good part from a fellow, but never from a teacher or parent.

A great gain is made if you can evoke in the mind of a discordant child an interest in

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something besides mischief, and resistance, apparently for the fun of it, to the wishes and purposes of others. And a little encouragement, and direction of some natural bent of the child is often all that is needful. His wholesome natural impulses, if he has any, may often be used to re-create him.

A sense of responsibility has great moderating value and it ought to be encouraged even to the extent of many fads and whims. To take up or have some useful aim (or even a useless one if pursued with continuity) is to remove much of the boy's misfit with his surroundings. The instant he is permitted or encouraged to do something or have something, and imagine himself of some of the consequence of manhood, the leaven has begun to work.

Parents often frown on some boy ambition in play-work because it has no obvious connection with the business of life, when it has the greatest possible value in the expanding of the boy himself. This latter is, during boyhood, the paramount business of life. Parents unable to see this, make the boys unhappy in their collecting of stamps or some less useful things, the training of their dogs and the building of their boats and machines, when these are the very

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exercises that foreshadow and prepare for the duties of mature years—these apparently useless pursuits are the tentative homologies of the larger things of the man's career.

When the boy comes to take up the work of life, or try to prepare for it, he has a right to be consulted about the course to pursue, and ought not, against strong dislikes, to be forced into an occupation that his elders believe him fitted for. History is replete with failures that have resulted from this bad policy—the policy has not succeeded, but has increased the discord and rebellion, and some of the failures are world-famous.

It is absurd to force a boy to continue long in a line of literary study when he wishes to be a machinist. If he will take up outdoor or shop work, and rebels against the classics, he has a right to his way about it, and society has the right to have him have it. The chances are that he will eagerly take up any practical study in mechanical or manual lines that may be offered him. But he should not be forced to do even this; nor should any child be given an elaborate education at the point of the bayonet. I know that substantially the

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contrary is the contention of the hour, but it is a species of nonsense that has done a vast amount of mischief. The right rule is to give any child an education who desires it and will work for it, and who will make it tell for greater usefulness and happiness. But if there is substantial reason to force study and education on any one, it holds for the discordant child; for intellectual pursuits more than anything else may remove the discord. Only the scheme will probably fail if he discovers that he is being forced. All thought of compulsion disappears however when the child shows, as he usually does, strong avidity for such studies as object-lesson work and manual training; and botany, geology, and other sciences when taken up practically and pursued in the woods, the mountains or by the sea. No caterpillar ever changed more in becoming a butterfly than many boys who have hated the restraint of the schoolroom and pure book study, change when they are liberated to this practical sort of schooling. It is like going from dungeon bars to light and freedom.

It is wrong to ridicule a young person because he tries several occupations before finding the right one or the one he is satis-

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fied with. It is his misfortune that he vacillates, rarely his fault, and it may require numerous trials and tests before he is settled into the right groove. Some are unable to stay long in any one groove; they are always looking for the right one for a permanency, and never quite find it. Their fault is a nervous one, sometimes a nervous disease that they cannot avoid. They are nervous and vacillating through life and cannot help it. It seems to require such to make a world—all cannot have the ideal stability and sustained power. The newly discovered disorder of hyperthyroidation explains some, perhaps most, of these cases. If most of them, then a sovereign remedy for it would be the greatest possible benefaction to the world, for it would radically change the character of society.

If a child is discontented and rebellious it is better to let him try different pursuits, diversions and studies, in the hope of his finding the one that can engage and tranquilize his mind. But he should be made to feel his own large responsibility in the matter, and be spared the vicious influence of thinking that everything must be done for him, and that he need do nothing for himself. To set a boy up at great expense in

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several successive kinds of business to be failed in, as rich parents are wont to do, often adds to his demoralization. Such cases illustrate in a negative way some of the advantages in being poor.

It is a great step forward when one of these children comes to desire to win and have the respect of worthy people. And the entering wedge is often the act of making him feel that such people have an interest in him. If he is once touched in this way he is saved indeed.

But the encouragement to this end is precisely the thing we are likely not to offer. It is easier to pursue the method of vindictive punishment, to lash and scold and snarl at the wayward children, a method that too often leads to a course of sustained resistance that has a touch of the heroic. We may not justify the resistance, but we can hardly wonder at it, and are often reluctantly compelled to admire it.

The late Superintendent Howland, of Chicago, was one day sitting in the office of a school principal when an intelligent but dogged looking boy entered the room with a note from his teacher, telling of some fresh disobedience, and saying that her resources in controlling him were ex-

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hausted. The principal turned to Howland in despair and recited (in the presence of the boy) a long catalogue of punishments that had been inflicted on him to compel obedience and good conduct. He had been suspended repeatedly, and expelled once or twice and taken back again; his parents had whipped him often, and the principal had flogged him at their request; and he had received sundry other refinements of humiliation and torture, including starvation, cold, and a general withholding of the pleasures of boy life. But, like an embodiment of total depravity, he had grown worse rather than better. Would Mr. Howland suggest an expedient? Yes, he would, and it was to leave the boy with him for half an hour.

Once alone with him Howland began to ask questions about the boy's life, his parents, brothers, sisters and friends; his birthplace and residence; his nationality and traditions; and about his games and amusements. Then he told of the sports of his own childhood, and discussed with the boy the relative merits of the games at the two periods; and finally about his own studies, then the boy's studies, and the experiences in learning, and the relative merits of the different studies and their

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value in after life. And the boy freely expressed his opinions. When the principal returned Howland said to the boy: "You may go back to your room now. I shall be glad to discuss these matters further with you sometime."

In three months Howland came again, when the principal eagerly asked him what he had done to the incorrigible boy when left alone with him at his previous visit. He replied, "I did nothing. Why do you ask?" "I ask because he has, from that hour, been a changed being; he is the best boy in the whole school." And so he was. He was a new soul born into the civilized world, and all because, perhaps, for the first time in his life, a man of his largest estimation had actually talked with him for thirty minutes, and had conferred with him as though he had a mind and a soul, and was worthy of consideration. The confidence of a larger nature had touched him; he had felt the tingle of it as a new responsibility, and had risen to its level. Morally he had grown a foot taller in that brief time. The new birth to a better purpose, that befell this boy, is what occurs in hundreds of the undegenerate discordant children; occurs by a single act or event, some unexpected, per-



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haps momentary influence that happens for the time to put a better impulse of the child in control of him where a worse one had governed, and the better element may then guide him through life. This is the great transformation to strive for with all these unfortunate children. That such a sudden alteration is possible, such a complete change in the moral nature, and that the new phase will often continue for life, is one of the most amazing as well as encouraging facts in human life and nature.

The correction and punishment of children is always a bitter problem. There are numerous kinds of punishment and several effects on the child that are undesirable—a few that are desirable. He is either repentant and resolves to be good; or he finds the smart makes the fun of the mischief unprofitable; or he finds that the occupation growing out of the discipline takes the place of the roguery, and so he forgets the latter; or he is ugly and mad to the core, and stays so.

The thing most to be wished is, of course, that he who is chastised shall be chastened, be better and not worse for it, nor more embittered in spirit. This is not likely to result if the sentence is vindictive, or given in

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anger, or to conserve the injured dignity of the older person, or on a strictly punitive basis, i. e., so much offense, so much punishment. Given in either of these ways punishment is likely to harm the child, and sure to harm the giver of it.

The only safe and altogether wholesome sort of punishment is that which, in a way, suggests and controls itself; what some like to call retributive punishment, because it seems to grow naturally out of the offense, as when a boy is made to pick up the potatoes he has spilled; to work and pay for the dishes he has broken. This kind of treatment is free from the vice of ministering to the egoism of the monitors as shown in their anger, or conceit; the children themselves, the best natural judges of ethics, know this and are better for it. Such punishment, if strictly speaking it is punishment, which I doubt, is one of the most helpful exercises for any child, and I can see no reason why all children should not in this manner be led daily to feel responsibility for their acts.

Finally, the discipline of the law is useful, the hand of authority—for the neglect of duty and the heedlessness that carries harm to others, and for the misdemeanor. The

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good effect of the truant laws in force in certain American cities is perfectly apparent. So far as can be learned they have all been economical and beneficial to society; they have lessened crime and been good for all concerned. So too of the curfew laws. They have greatly lessened the small misdemeanors and perceptibly decreased the larger ones. They are a paying investment to the community, and a benefit to all the children they touch.

Now, schools have been organized for truant children where the recalcitrants are housed, fed, taught and made to work about the affairs of their daily wants and needs. And the good effect for nearly all of them is prompt and enduring. After a variable period they are all (except the true degenerates) sent back to their homes and common schools, and make tractable and obedient pupils. It is contact with the realities of existence in a new way that works the metamorphosis; the object-lessons of study and work for the needs of life, which create a new interest and mental attention never before thought of; and greatest of all, repeated gentle encounters with the inexorableness of law. For the conditions of the cases in hand nothing ever has, or probably ever

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will, take the place of this last force. That it should be despised by philosophers is proof of one of the far-swings of the pendulum of thought.

One of the greatest gains is that the children are taught the force and meaning of law, and that laws must sometimes be obeyed. That the true basis of the law is the good of society will come to them later. Then the law, executing itself by its impersonal fiat, is free from the quality of spite; and boys hate to be punished from spite. Even if the sheriff—for the time the personal hand of the law—is accused of unnecessary severity, the boys are usually ready to absolve the entity called the state from any part in it. To them the state stands, to some degree at least, in the attitude of a force that is inevitable and without malice.

The dish-water philosophy of non-resistance, the abrogation of force, and final complete resort to moral suasion, weaken some phases of human character that are indispensable to effective and determining force in the world, for they belie such great facts of the universe as the unavoidable struggle for existence, the greed and pressure of in-born selfishness, and the hard knocks most

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children must sooner or later take, and perchance give.

Some current teaching seems ambitious to make us believe that there is no turmoil in life, no struggle, temptation or tragedy. Many people do go through life and die with none of the struggles, but they are few compared to the whole population. All children are liable some day to meet the hardships and the storms, and when those not steeled aright do have to face them, they are thrown into consternation, and may become embittered toward the world; and they frequently blame their elders and teachers who might have shown them the realities and dangers of life. It is better to be told the truth and to face the inevitable than to be lulled into false hopes, and live in an atmosphere of the unreal, to be finally disillusioned with a shock.

It is beautiful to be able to rise into the clouds of imagination, and float there in a reverie of diversion; and to believe that all of life is prearranged and ideal. But, for the fateful, wholesome struggles of existence, it profits us mightily—and especially the discordant ones among us—to remember that we walk on the earth, which is bestrewn with rocks that shall bruise our feet, and

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pitfalls that shall make us stumble; that the toils of nature and the earning of bread are wholesome for us, and must go on forever; and that the truest joy as well as the most wholesome lives are realized to us as we find pleasure in work, and have contentment in small gains and moderate successes.

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